RAMBLES IN HIGH SAVOY

I dedicate this book to my Father. It was he who gave me, from my earliest childhood, my love of the mountains. F. G.

RAMBLES IN HIGH SAVOY

ROCK PINNACLE ON THE GRÉPON

RAMBLES
IN
HIGH SAVOY

By FRANÇOIS GOS

WITH A PREFACE BY GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG, AND AN INTRODUCTION BY F. REGAUT, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH ALPINE CLUB

Numerous illustrations from photographs by Fréd. Boissonnas, E. Gos, Granier, A. Kern, etc.

Translated by FRANK KEMP

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THE SHORES OF LAKE GENEVA AT SCIEZ

PREFACE

by GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG

Some of us go abroad to enjoy the excitement of novel scenery, for the tonic it can afford our eyes and thoughts and for the adventure which it may offer to our holiday activity. Others of us are primarily interested in new peoples, and in their refreshingly different ways of living. But we do not get the full benefit of our change until we have discovered that the perfect holiday is only to be found in a blending of these two interests, the scenic and the social. Scenery is doubly interesting when it is seen as a picturesque setting for the daily life of other human beings ; and the novel ways of foreign folk are better appreciated where they are ascertained to be a natural or historical growth, an adjustment of human needs and human aspirations to an environment unfamiliar to our own experience.

The hills and valleys of approach to great mountain ranges are the proper home of this blended interest. Below us lie the plains: where civilisation is dominant, and uniformly so. Above us emerge the great heights: where a uniformity of natural solitude is as obvious.

But between the two lies an infinite variety of surprise and interchange. The efforts, the traditions, the compromises in ways of human living—we can see, here, how they are produced by, and in turn affect the less salient but no less beautiful forms and colours of the earth's uneven surface midway between its heights and its levels.

It is with one of these regions, the right region as I have said for holiday wandering and refreshing impression, that this book of François Gos' is concerned. Whether we take it with us as an illuminating companion, or read it at home, we find ourselves—even as we do when we have the places actually before our eyes—at one time looking up at the heights and pursuing the stories and thrills of ascents upon Mont Blanc itself, at another diverted to the exclusion of other interests by such local aspects, personal oddities, and wayside meetings as gave their enduring value to the " Voyages en Zigzag " of M. Tœpffer—in a sense M. Gos' predecessor.

But François Gos has his own claim upon our interest. His name is one familiar to those who know the Western Alps. He has an almost " dynastic " right to our attention and regard. His father, Emile Gos, not only gave to us the Alps in charming pictures, but inspired his sons with a lifelong enthusiasm for all that they contained, of human character no less than of scenery and adventure. His sons, familiar from boyhood with every mountain view and village story, have in their turn continued, most happily, to interpret them for us, with pen, brush and camera. From Charles Gos we have had " Près des Névés et des Glaciers," " Propos d'un Alpiniste," and "La Croix du Cervin," books delightfully written and already deservedly popular. And now François Gos has followed his admirable descriptions in " Zermatt and its Valley " with this very sympathetic study of higher Savoy.

Phot. E. Gos

SCRAMBLE ON THE AIGUILLE DE L'M

The illustrations by themselves might almost content us as a book. In Savoy there is a peculiar affinity between the character of the

Phot. Boissonnas

RETURNING FROM CHURCH
(Costumes of Savoy)

scenery and the character of the inhabitants, their buildings and customs. We cannot think of Savoy as only glacial peaks and passes, nor only as falling alps of summer flowers, nor yet only as romantic villages bright with festal costumes and musical voices. We think of it in single pictures which combine all the three simultaneously. In like manner, history bears witness to the hardihood no less than to the sociability and gay courage of the Savoyard mountaineers. M. Regaut in his Introduction to this volume—and from no one could it come more fittingly than from the gallant commander of the " Diables Bleus " in the late war—brings the tribute up to date. Many of us could confirm it : and not only from those years, but from the pleasure we have taken in the companionship with their daring, picturesqueness and unconquerable fun among their own valleys, on ways of peace.

It is this unusual harmony of grave and gay, the transitions from severe mountain forms to wayside scenes alive with colour, with pathos and with humorous contrasts, which François Gos reproduces for us with artistic fidelity. Our appreciation can follow his, from a talk with a local musician to a vision of Mont Blanc, to the women at their weekly washing or to acrobatics on a Chamonix Aiguille, as naturally as our eye or our interest would follow the same course—and accept its appropriateness—were the atmosphere

and mountain background of those high villages actually about us.

Scenery by itself, in description, palls upon most of us : it is dead stuff to read about : lacking its own atmosphere and movement it has no life. The ways of men—especially if they are treated of scientifically—are even more tiresome : an anatomical museum, at best a wax-work show. Our entertainment only begins when the two are happily associated, in story and picture ; and when from some fortunate union in such a book as this is born the sense of movement, the illusion of reality, and we receive the pleasant conviction that the page has come alive.

Not so many years ago we were still dull enough to speak of earlier attempts to effect this union as " gossiping guides," and to pretend to be superior to them—while we most of us carried them with us ! It is one of the surest signs of the advance we have made in our right appreciation of nature that we now find it natural that all the resources of artistic and literary craft should be devoted to making these companionable and human books things of beauty in themselves. To remind us of a region we know, or to guide us upon fresh exploration, we are growing unwilling to accept anything less lively, attractive and replete with human nature, be it as a companion upon our holiday journey, or as an armchair substitute for it.

GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG.

April, 1927.

Phot. Granier

Snow on the Semnoz

INTRODUCTION

By F. REGAUT, President of the French Alpine Club.

This book has no need of any introduction from me. Its author is well-known to the public for whom he writes, and its publishers, for their part, are well-assured of another of those successes to which they have long been accustomed. I have, nevertheless, the greatest pleasure in writing my brief foreword to these pages dedicated to the praise and glory of Savoy, for I am indeed sensible of the honour done me by the patrons and promoters of this work.

I still maintain, with one of these, the relations of comradeship which we formed on the battlefields of the Great War. We both served in those Alpine troops of which France is so proud, and it was thus that we were able to put to a practical test the truth of the epigraph from which François Gos draws his inspiration.

The " Blue Devils," as they were called, were noted, above all else, for their fire, tenacity, and determined vigour, together with a high spirit of discipline and of sacrifice. To say that the soul

nurtured in Alpine air absorbs those virtues with every breath is to utter a common-place.

On the steep mountain-side, among the tufts of tiny gentians, edelweiss, and rhododendrons, are also to be gathered flowers rarer and more delicate—those of friendship and of brotherly love. Storming the enemies' positions, these gallant fellows fell in their solid sheaves, more strongly bound together by their common upbringing among the high hills than by the stoutest of hempen cords. We shall never know, alas! how much perished with them of the sturdy and splendid manhood of Savoy!

This magnificent French province, with its incomparable peaks, has had first place in my heart from my earliest youth. It is now more than forty years since my father, an Allobroge of the old stock, used to wander with me through its green recesses. I am indebted to those rambles for my earliest intimations of the beauty of its far-spreading horizons, of the enchantments that attend the dreamer in mountain solitudes. I saw Mont Blanc from the Semnoz, from Mont Revard, and from the Dent du Chat, in 1883, before I was thirteen years old, and experienced thus the first raptures of that wondrous Alpine vision which is known to so many others. As our author well says :

" This region of Upper Savoy is certainly one of the most
" diversified in the world, with its varied soils, its rich lands
" where the harvest grows yellow and the vine bends beneath
" its burden of fruit : where chestnut-trees dot the landscape
" with their sumptuous green
" masses and dark pine forests
" stand out against the dazz-
" ling white of the glaciers.
" Many indeed are those
"who admire this splendid
" region, which awakens
" in us a new ideal of

" beauty and an ever-deepening interest in the manners and " customs of its people."

The region covered by this work has proved a magnet for minds so different as Rousseau, Goethe, Shelley, Byron, Richard Wagner and Ruskin, as well as for those early climbing heroes who first faced the dangers of Mont Blanc. Mountains of Savoy ! ethereal peaks of ice, rocky spires, and heaven-kissing summits : smiling valleys, too, and wondrous lakes : genial soil, beloved by all your sons, and renowned throughout the world : you have in François Gos a good friend and a great lover !

Whether climbing mountains, following a vagrant fancy or taking part in one of the numerous excursions offered by the neighbourhood of Geneva, he manifests a noble capacity for admiration and a gift for reproducing the talk of chance-met acquaintances, which is always true to life. His is a delicate lightness of touch, a charming simplicity ; the story is told, the instruction given, with effortless ease. A landscape is limned in a few words of rapid description. The history of an abbey, an old castle, an important event, is briefly, unpedantically, sketched. His narrative abounds in memories of youth treated in a smiling and ironically humorous style, reminiscent of the manner of the great Toepffer himself. And

On the Grépon :
Descending the " Grand Diable "

finally, the publishers have shown both masterly taste and feeling in the many fine illustrations which adorn the text.

The reader will close this volume—which celebrates one part only of our beloved Savoy—with both mind and eyes fully satisfied, and will look forward with impatience to the day when François Gos will guide him also in similar manner to the threshold of Chambéry, to the Bauges, the Tarentaise, and the Maurienne.

F. REGAUT.

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FOLDING MAP AT END.

Phot. Boissonnas

THE MASSIF OF MONT BLANC
Seen from Lake Geneva

CHAPTER I

GENERAL SURVEY

GENEVA—springtime! The map of the Highlands of Savoy, open before me, shows me the whole extent of the country I love. Musing, I ponder that pictured outline. What a small district it is compared with the country to which it belongs; yet how great to one who explores it from end to end! Here are rivers and valleys running down, a multitude of them, from the glacial chain of Mont Blanc, highways and byeways descending to the long blue streak of Lake Geneva: and the mountains on which I love to clamber standing out in shades of mauve or brown, according to their height.

A broad shaft of sunlight falling on the rectangle of paper spread out before me, drives books and papers from my head; I turn to the window. How fine it is outside, how warm and bright! Already the grass is turning green on the lawn and the

young leaves quiver on the lime-trees. I can hear the blackbird's whistle and the call of his mate replying. The snow may still lie thick in the hollows where the cold shadows protect it, but it is melting on the slopes already exposed to the newly kindled fire of spring and the disrobed meadows are sprinkled with patches of grey. Soon the chalet doors will welcome the coming guest and in a day or two the cows, lowing to the mountain slopes, will follow one another into pastures all freshly painted in living green.

Once more the healthful Sunday walks, the days of pleasant sauntering, come round again and even now I often stroll, a fond lover of the spring, to the shore of the lake, where I can watch the dark outlines of the mountains of Savoy against the palest of skies.

These summits form a barrier to eastward of the lake and their continual presence there makes them sharers in our lives. They are before our eyes every hour of the day, and always admirable, whether draped in cloud or bathed in the colours of dawn, of noonday, or of sunset. Hence comes it that they are dear to us, even as kindly customary things are dear.

To-day, the water shines bright blue in the sunlight. The smooth mirror of the Geneva roadstead reflects the bright-faced houses on the quay, the slopes of Cologny and of Douvaine, the sails of immaculate whiteness fleeting over the water like the slender wings of swans. Behind the town, beyond the Salève and the Voirons, emerges summit after summit, far-off, white, gleaming, terrace on terrace of them, above the Pointe des Brasses and the Pointe de Marcelly. The highest mountains, these ; peaks of the formidable chain of Mont Blanc, the Alpine barrier including the Aiguille du Chardonnet, the Aiguille d'Argentière, the Aiguille Verte, the Aiguilles du Dru, the Grandes Jorasses, and Mont Blanc itself, wearing a halo of sunlight on its rounded dome of snow. The Môle, between the Giffre and Arve valleys, blocks out quite a piece of the sky ; with the snow still on its heights, it looks from here like the self-conscious Fuji-Yama of some Japanese print.

If by chance I set out in a boat towards Lausanne or Montreux, then even as I sail I would see my line of friendly summits sinking towards the east, while the mountains of Savoy, dominating Evian, Meillerie, Tourronde, St. Gingolph, would loom up more and more distinctly on the horizon. These mountains are the Dents d'Oche, the Rochers de Mémise, the Casque de Borée and the Grammont. Their long shadows are reflected even in the last little wavelets that lap the Vaudois shore.

Phot. Boissonnas

SUMMER IN SAVOY

This countryside is certainly one of the most diversified in the world, with its varied soils, its rich meadows where the harvests grow yellow, where the vine, when autumn comes, is bedecked with heavy clusters of grapes, and the chestnut-trees become so many sumptuous green globes, while the pine forests stand out in black on a background of glaciers. A country with

many admirers ; awakening us to an ideal of beauty, interesting us by reason of the manners, by reason of the customs of its inhabitants. " It is a pity the Savoyards are not rich, or perhaps it would be a pity if they were, for, such as they are, they are the best and most sociable people I know." So said and thought Jean Jacques Rousseau.

He was not the first. The Alpine beauties of Upper Savoy were known before him : (the *Nouvelle Héloïse* appeared about 1761)—two Englishmen, Mr Windham and Dr Pococke, having made in 1749 an excursion by way of the Mer de Glace at Chamonix, with the sole purpose of admiring and contemplating the mountains.

The " glaciaires de Chamouni " soon became the fashion and the " Temple de la Nature " took the place, for the Alpine climbers of the day, of the hut of the herdsman of Montenvers, where, until then, they had had to pass the night. It might be said that the history of climbing was born on the mountain-tops of Savoy and that Blair, the Englishman, de Saussure and Bourrit were its pioneers.

At the heels of these explorers, there came to these mountains a number of distinguished men, who, according to their minds, their temperaments, their feeling for nature, expressed, each in his own way their admiration for the country and made it universally celebrated. I speak of Goethe, Shelley, Byron, Georges Sand, Ruskin. There is, in this connection, a print of the period recalling the expedition made by Georges Sand to this region. She is dressed as a man, and is depicted wearing a cap with a large peak, and a long belted smock, and of course she is seen grasping

Phot. Boissonnas

MORNEX
The villa of Richard Wagner

Phot. Tairraz

MONTENVERS : THE " TEMPLE DE LA NATURE "
erected by Bourrit in 1795

the indispensable alpenstock. She looks like some urchin escaped from Töpffer's band of pupils. Ruskin, for his part, is so enthusiastic that he proposes buying the summit of the Brezon and building his house there. And Wagner, in his home at Mornex - sous - Salève, with Mont Blanc constantly before his eyes—how could he but be impressed and indeed inspired in his art, by the wondrous scene.

Pondering some air from the *Valkyrie*, I am roused by the sudden cry of a swallow in pursuit of its prey—a flutter and swoop of wings through the blue air ; and my imagination carries me off to the expeditions I have in mind for the days to come. I shall begin by the Alpine foot-hills; in the spring they have a charm and poetry known only to their lovers. Nor are they difficult to climb, while from each of their summits magnificent views are to be had of the giant Alps, not only of the whole range of Mont Blanc, but also of the Alps of Dauphiné, of the Bernese Oberland, and of the Valais, veiling their ample tops in purple haze ; and from certain summits one overlooks Lake Geneva, bluest of waters, and has close at hand the panorama of peaks belonging to the company of the Vaudois Alps or of the Fribourg foot-hills.

There are easy roads or paths of access to these mountains ; but it is interesting to scale them by ways unknown to persons merely intent on a simple walk. And in that case there is no lack of precipices, rock ridges, couloirs and chimneys, either on the chain of the Aravis, the Pointe Percée, the Pic de Tanneverge, or on the Aiguilles de Varens, localities much frequented by climbers, who go there to " raise muscle " before undertaking more dangerous expeditions. Does the wanderer in the valley of the Arve or of the Giffre realise that he is treading in the footsteps of history, and does he even give a thought to the Romans

who subjugated the reputedly valiant tribe of the Allobroges and established themselves for several centuries in the country ? A stone marking the frontier at Prarion—the only road from Chamonix ran here at that time—dates from that period. It was erected by order of the Emperor Augustus about the year 73 of our era, by Cneius Pinarius, the imperial legate, and divided the country of the Allobroges from that of the Centrons.

Feudalism has left impressive remains in Savoy, as in every other land. The wars and strife of the Middle Ages ravaged the fields of Chablais, of Faucigny, and of the Genevese territory, laying waste the castle-keeps and strongholds still to be seen at Etrembières, Thonon, Thuiset, Avully, Buffavens, Ripaille, Bonneville ; and there are ramparts still standing at Langin, Faucigny and on the hill of Allinges.

Walking becomes pleasantly possible with the first breath of spring, when the hawthorn begins to blossom in the hedges and the violet is hidden in thickets under crumbling walls. With one's back to a sun-warmed slab, one can watch the countryside awakening to its life of toil : rivers, roads, run this way and that, far-off, and the little towns and villages are thickly planted in a landscape that grows greener every hour. The mountains, still snow-clad, look pale against the hollow sky. And one wonders: What sort of a life had the inhabitants of those parts, six, seven, eight centuries ago ? One imagines the soldiers in heavy armour, the cavalcades of lords and fair ladies, with their following of rustics, hinds as poor then as they are now, staring open-mouthed at the glistening silks and velvets, and spending their lives in sweat over a soil which was theirs only on loan.

Churches were built, and pious monks came flocking to the monasteries in the depths of hidden valleys : abbeys such as those of Marèche, Abondance, Sixt, Ripaille, the two chartreuses of the Reposoir and of Mélan. Thus, in utter retirement from the world, grew and prospered the monastic life—the distant murmur of war hardly loud enough to trouble it. Sometimes the sky would be red at night over burning townships, or perhaps for a moment the peace of the forest would be broken by the sound of the hunting horn and the clatter of horsemen in pursuit of the stag, the boar, or the wolf.

But the peace of the hills resumed all its sway over the lives of men set apart for contemplation or of those whom the

Phot. Boissonnas

THE CHATEAU OF RIPAILLE, NEAR THONON

At one time a hunting-lodge of the Counts of Savoy and a favourite resort of the Court of Savoy in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Phot. Boissonnas

WASHING DAY

rhythm of the seasons had subdued to the labour of the fields.

. . . . . .

I can see that it will not be long before I am gathering the jonquils in the Plaine aux Rocailles, and couch-grass, and armfuls of beechen boughs: how the light shows up their transparent green ! And then I shall make for the Voirons, those wooded slopes that lie between St. Cergues and Boëge, and sketch all the way to Hermone. Further on begins the country of the Dranse, the river of three branches whose valleys are united near the village on the Col de Vernaz. The Dranse d'Abondance marks the limits of the mountains of the lake (the Dents d'Oche, Mémise, the Casque de Borée, the Grammont, the Cornettes de Bise), the Dranse du Biot waters a number of villages—Seytroux, St. Jean d'Aulph—passing near the lake of Montriond. The valley which it makes communicates, by the Col des Gets, with that of the Giffre. The third Dranse, finally, bears the name of Bellevaux or Brevon; its source is in the *massif* of the Pointe de Chalune and of the Roc d'Enfer.

Nearer the Alps which we shall explore when summer comes, flows the Giffre in a picturesque valley. The Môle and the Pointe des Brasses block the approaches to it, but a road connects the well-known villages of Mieussy, Taninges, Samoëns, and Sixt. The latter place is the starting point for the imposing amphitheatre called the Fer-à-Cheval, with its famous cascades.

There are summits in this neighbourhood approaching and even exceeding 10,000 feet : Mont Ruan, the peaks of Tanneverge and of Finive, and the Rochers du Perron, mountains on which the Franco-Swiss frontier traces an irregular arabesque. The Buet is the centre of this region, where also are the Lake of Gers, the chain of the Rochers des Fiz, the Fonds chalets, the Col d'Anterne, and the Col de Servoz. Rising opposite Mont Blanc, the Buet makes a most marvellous advance-guard to that

Phot. Boissonnas

SIXT
The Church

mountain. Between the Giffre and the Arve a group of mountains attracts the tourist ; these are the Pointe and the Désert de Platé, the Aiguilles de Varens, the Rochers des Fiz, the Pointe de Coloney. Facing them, across the valley of the Arve, stretches that of Montjoie, called also Contamines, which comes to an end at the Col du Bonhomme.

Not far from these rise Mont de la Rosselette and Mont Joly ; thence the meadows lead to Mégève, a place well known for its winter sports. From this point we shall direct our steps towards Annecy, returning by way of Sallanches and La Roche, when we shall be in a part of the country beloved by the Genevese. Who among us, in fact, does not know the Col des Aravis, with the Pointe Pelouse, the Pointe Percée, the Pointe d'Areu ? Below on the green pastures can be seen the Chartreuse du Reposoir and the village of Pralong, at the foot of a second chain, the Vergys, with the summits of the Pic de Jalouvre, the Pointe Blanche and the Pointe du Midi. Here, too, are the villages of Brizon and Mont Saxonnex, dominated by the Bargys and the Rochers de Leschaux. We shall also scale Sous-Dine and Roche Parnal, after having crossed the Borne.

In these pages I set out again on a pilgrimage : the pilgrimage which filled my youth. I am carried back to the far-off day when we care-free students, knapsack on back, set out every Saturday evening from our homes, taking train to La Roche, Cluses, or Samoëns, and then tramping by night over the twisting roads between the gloomy mountain-walls. Little by little the light of day would come, the meadows emerge from the shadows, and we would arrive at our lodging in some hidden hamlet. I can still hear the well-known words of the gay song we sang :

" Le soir, bien tard, nous trouvons un logis,
Madame l'hôtesse, combien avez-vous d'lits ?
La blonde hôtesse répond d'un air aimable :
Ceusses de Genève sont souvent pas convenables,
J'ai un boîton exprès pour les grimpeurs,
Ousque que j'relègue ces gens trop chahuteurs
—Bon, ça va bien, dit le chef de course,
On pourra serrer les cordons de la bourse ! . . ."

And as a matter of fact we often did pass the short night *à la belle étoile* or in some little shed. Little did we care ! Happy was my heart when I climbed you, oh glorious summits of Savoy, and happy am I again to visit you !

Phot. Boissonnas

AT THE FOOT OF THE SALÈVE
Harvesting time at Gaillard

CHAPTER II

THE PLAINE-AUX-ROCAILLES

I CAN think of no excursion more popular among the people of Geneva than that to the Plaine-aux-Rocailles, or Plain of the Rocks. As soon as the weather is fine enough and the cold showers of March are over and gone, everyone is on the look-out for the early jonquils, those beautiful yellow flowers that make so glorious a show among the briars and bushes of the " Plaine " in the neighbourhood of Régnier. It is a strange-featured landscape, an immense grassy surface strewn with huge boulders and groups of rocks, fantastically carved, each with its story and legendary name : the Roche-du-Diable, the Roche-aux-Trésors, and the Pierre-aux-Morts ; and here, on the borders of this wilderness, in old tumble-down houses with thatched roofs, a population of farmers finds a home. From the door of a cattle-shed the stately oxen come forth to plough, pacing slowly, and softly swaying their great heads under the heavy yoke ; a youth follows them, switch in hand. Hens go pecking and clucking ; a cart passes. Unhasting, unresting, the work of husbandry goes forward ; little by little the earth is

tamed, the soil fertilised; and finally the wild "Plaine" is bound captive in a girdle of furrowed fields.

One of these fields has for near neighbour the Pierre aux Fées (Fairies' Stone) which stands on the road in a tangle of bushes, under the shade of a walnut tree. This is a fine example of the dolmen. Its enormous granite table is balanced on three other stones. According to the story, the lord of the castle near Bellecombe spread his wedding-feast on this table. On the other side of the road, a number of oaks recall those ancient times when a dense growth of vast forests covered the country and sheltered the migratory hordes who have left behind them in almost every corner of the earth these mysterious megalithic monuments. In this region, only the dolmens of Régnier and of St. Cergues remain, those of Pers-Jussy, of Cranves, and of Étrembières having been destroyed. For all the prosaic wretchedness of the Fairies' Stone in the secular light of our modern day, we can still imagine the forest-clearing under a full moon; and aloft there on the sacred stone, the white-robed druidess, brandishing her golden bill-hook. But a motor-car passes, and the vision fades in the dust of the wheels. Further on there is singing and shouting from a band of excursionists: an irruption of the noisy mob; but the mob is happy, and will go home carrying sheaves of yellow narcissi, hepaticas, violets, primroses, all the early spring flowers, blossoms thrice welcome that they have come while winter still lies heavy and white on the hills about us, and Sous-Dine, Roche-Parnal, the Rochers de Leschaux, and the Vergys are still resplendent in their mantles of snow. And then there comes a freshening wind, the clouds gather, the smiling splendour vanishes, and only grey stones, bare trees and thorny thickets remain.

Phot. Boissonnas

THE PIERRE AUX FÉES, NEAR RÉGNIER

One of the few dolmens found in Savoy

For my own part, I like best to come to the Plaine-aux-Rocailles in the "merry month of May." Then,

Phot. Kern

General View of the Voirons (4,856 ft.) and of the Môle (6,132 ft.)
In the background on the right, the hill of Monthoux

when the green wheat ripples in the wind and all the land is gay with the yellow splashes of the many-petaled colzas, and a sky as blue as it will be in June shines through the foliage of the apple-trees, the country-side round Régnier is a continual feast for the eye, and the ear is everywhere delighted with the songs of birds. At midday in the quiet little town, the streets will be almost deserted. But near the door of the *hospice* you will see groups of old people. Round-shouldered, shrivelled-up old creatures, they totter along with the short step of old age, leaning on their sticks. They, too, feel the sun in their veins and are glad.

Here I would advise the traveller to take something to eat at a café ; only, cafés being numerous, it is just as well to be careful in the choice of one. Let us suppose that hunger proves a happy guide : behold us, then, seated in a little establishment at one of those well-polished tables of walnut wood, on which a smiling waitress presently places the traditional Savoyard omelette, which we wash down with a " demi de blanc." I shall not reveal the name or sign of this particular tavern, but the walls of its coffee-room are sure to be hung with dusty engravings of an earlier and more artless order of advertisement, an order fast disappearing before our brutal modern methods.

Here, for example, are " Les fervents disciples de la Saint-Lundi " engrossed in their multifarious callings. The solitary rule of the society is stated in a single, brief formula : " Members shall work four days in the week, rest for three, drink nothing but wine, and never touch water." Another picture represents the famous men of France from Charlemagne to Monsieur Béranger, enshrined in a kind of Greek temple, on the forefront of which may be read the words : " Gloire immortelle aux grands hommes—La Patrie reconnaissante ! " The smiling waitress moderates my enthusiasm by pointing out that " if these things had been painted by hand, they would be worth much more." She passes on, holding aloft a smoking dish from which an agreeable odour is wafted, and I give myself up to the contemplation of " Les Ages de la Vie," a huge and learned composition, in which the evolution of terrestrial life is symbolised by couples climbing a staircase. Here we have the communicant, very sober and demure : the beribboned conscript, already looking somewhat less of a hobbledehoy ; and the young man and his wife, with a child between them ; while *Monsieur*, carrying a money-bag, and *Madame* in a crinoline, with a little horror of a dog in her arms, descend, as befits them, the other spiral. Images of decay and mortal weakness follow, and finally Man himself, a solitary being a hundred years of age, awaits the approach of death and eternity . . . And the Savoyard omelette (I had almost forgotten it) was delicious, crisp, and golden.

Phot. Kern

THE MÔLE SEEN FROM LES TREIZE ARBRES

CHAPTER III

THE MOLE
(6,132 ft.)

WHEN the droughts of summer have parched and peeled the grassy dome of the Môle, there is no great pleasure to be had from attempting the ascent of that mountain: climbing is hard and difficult work under the burning sun, especially when the expedition starts from Geneva, as it generally does, and reaches the summit about mid-day. But in spring and autumn, it is a different story.

We make an early start ; and having succeeded in missing the train for Samoëns, take the first tramcar that offers, our Alpinists vowing—somewhat late in the day—not to be caught napping a second time. But retreat is out of the question ; our knapsacks are stuffed with good things, we are in excellent form, and eager for the road. We decide to trust our luck, and hope whispers gently to us as we go. From Moillesulaz we foot it merrily ; and if there are grumblers among us, the mishap has not damped the spirits of our party as a whole. Motor-cars overtake us ; we are bantered, jeered at ; and in spite of our piteous looks, unpitied. The rapid machines rush past us,

Phot Boissonnas

BONNE-SUR-MENOGE
At the foot of the Voirons

without slackening. But, here, surely, is an acquaintance of ours ? Those round American spectacles on that good-humoured nose—surely we have seen these before ? A passing wave of the hand is answered by all of us with imploring gestures. He pulls up, gives us a " lift " on the foot-board of his already fully occupied vehicle ; and so, justified of our faith in happy chance, we make up lost time with a vengeance ; and this time we shall not miss our train. We did well to keep up our hearts ! Behind us, our companions of the tramcar are like little black specks on the long, straight road.

Behold us in the train for Samoëns, the old familiar train that goes spitting soot and smoke, and puffs and pants on the inclines, perhaps stopping altogether. Move it does, however, and without our having to get out and push, as we would willingly have done in our young days ; and soon we are running under the heights of the Voirons, past gardens full of lilacs in their first bloom and blossoming apple-trees. It is Sunday ; we become suddenly aware of the fact by merely looking out of the window and seeing, almost everywhere along the line, men engaged in washing their faces at the pump. We pass a field of umbels, bordered by tall poplars, whilst behind the fretted curtain of their branches, appears the blue mass of the Môle. On the left we have a glimpse of the snows on the Buet, and on the right Sous-Dine and the Vergys lie bathed in morning light.

Phot, Boissonnas

AT ST. JEOIRE-EN-FAUCIGNY
Chateau of La Fléchère

Phot. Boissonnas

THE POINTE DES BRASSES (4,944 ft.)

The train stops : the driver has a fancy to gather a bunch of lilac. A few swallows, arrivals of a day or two ago, sit on a wire ; a flower-pot made out of the shells of snails ornaments the porch of a villa. One after another the stations succeed each other : La Bergue, Bonne-sur-Menoge, Pont-de-Fillinges, Viuz.

The wooded cone of the Môle occupies the whole space of the carriage window. On the edge of the track, the dainty chapel dedicated to St. Francis of Sales, in its hawthorn grove, tempts us to make a halt, but the train has no fancy for that. . . . We arrive at St. Jeoire, a big market-town, with old houses, a tower, and the castle of Beauregard, whose mediæval outline, dominating the village, lends a passing look of austerity to the landscape. Opposite the great clock of the Gendarmerie, rises the track to the Môle. A pot-bellied fellow, in a cap laced with silver, is watering his garden ; in shirt sleeves thus, among his lettuces, the " arm of the law " does not look too forbidding. The national flag hangs from a window, softly flapping in the wind, which as softly rumples the veils of two little communicants, very stiff and smiling, and each carrying a long candle, on their way to church.

FRIENDSHIP

The track is well-marked, and soon reaches the wood of beech and fir, as it mounts upwards in a zig-zag, beneath almost continuous shade. On the flank

Phot. Boissonnas

BONNEVILLE: THE CHATEAU

of the mountain stand the chalets of Palatieux, and higher up, those of Le Char-d'en-Bas; and, after two and a half hours' walking, we attain the upland pastures of L'Ecutieux. The forests fall away, and the summit, still veined with snow in the northern part which overhangs a deep valley, appears quite close. On our way up from the plain we have met with all the little spring flowers, one after another. In spite of the snow, we are still in the region of the flora: further up there will be only wintry barrenness. In the meadows the delicate crocuses thrust up their faces, white and violet, and the short-stalked jonquils display their shining corollas. It is hot. We halt and rest. Two men are busy tilling a meagre patch of soil, while a big, black dog and a little donkey chase each other about, the one barking, the other gamboling comically.

We have hardly left the meadow before we encounter on the slope the first buddings of the rhododendrons, but they will flower later on, under the summer sun. A good road leads to the pass, the prospect widens, all the mountains of Upper Savoy display their innumerable peaks around us. Before we arrive at the summit, we have still to face a steep slope, up which we toil, panting and perspiring. However, the effort is less than it seems, and soon we strike a path leading to the culminating point: a ridge, grassy on its southern slope, and on its northern side, falling abruptly down, a sheer cliff, with snow still lining its outer edge. The only streak of colour among the rocks comes from the rosy tufts of a single flower, the *saxifrage*

oppositifolia. There is no living thing on the mountain, and the herds will not make their appearance here till the yellow grass of the preceding autumn has turned green again. It will not be long before they seek pasturage on the long slope facing Bonneville.

Large clouds cover the sky in all directions, clinging in clusters to the mountain, and swathing the Môle in a grey blanket. The summits have disappeared, and the valleys are veiled ; but we have managed to get a glimpse of the roads we shall follow in future expeditions in this region.

Putting our best foot foremost on the descent, we arrive at the chalets of Les Riondets, which are still closed. (The chalets mentioned in the guide-books as possible hostelries no longer exist, but the tourist will find a bed among the hay in the barns of farms). Trees reappear ; first of all, some scraggy fir-trees, then forests of beeches, and the greater fir-trees. We redescend in the direction of the valley of the Arve, by way of a sort of plateau, called "la Grange à Béroud," where there are three or four houses. One of these is luckily open, and we are glad of its hospitality, for the rain begins to fall. A rustic and primitive habitation, in which garret, stable, living-room, and kitchen, all under one roof, are comprised in a single apartment.

A large bed of straw stands in a corner ; opposite it is the stove. A collection of odds and ends on the table is lit up by the light from a small window. The far-end of the room is in darkness. A large opening leads to the stable. A black-nosed sheep, and its lamb, thrust their odd-looking heads through the bars of a stall and the sheep licks the hat of the shepherd, who sits leaning against the rude fence, and extends his

Phot. Schnaldt

THE COL DU RAYRET

MARIGNIER AND THE MÔLE (6,132 ft.)

Phot. Boissonnas

hand to the moist muzzle, in a gentle caress. His wife puts cider before us, and glasses—the latter none too clean ; our portly hostess removes the stains by the application of a dash of water and her dainty finger. Ah—that cider was good !

Outside, it threatens a serious storm ; but we take advantage of a bright interval to resume our road ; and by way of the rocky track leading to Perthuis, and a few " dévaloirs," we are not long in reaching the hamlets of Les Galinons and of Epargny, thus crossing the wall of rocks that girdles the mountain, a wall that has in great part been the work of the Arve, striving to hollow out a passage for itself, in the course of millions of years. And finally we reach Bonneville and find our train waiting.

This expedition to the Môle is well worth making, and I recommend it to all who have a mind to pay a visit to Upper Savoy. This summit is a kind of central vantage-ground from which can be seen every peak in the country.

Phot. Kern

THE VOIRONS

CHAPTER IIIA

FROM THE VOIRONS TO MARCELLY

(By the Brasses, the Pointe de Miribel, Mont d'Hirmente and the Roc d'Enfer)

SKIRTING the road on his left, as he goes from Geneva to the Môle, the traveller sees meadows, orchards, flowery slopes, wooded uplands and modest hills. These are the last undulations of mountains of no great height, but of many attractive features, stretching from the valley of the Menoge to that of the Risse,—two parallel valleys, named respectively after two torrents, one of which comes down from Mont Forchat, near Lullin, and the other from the Col de Jambaz. In contrast to the thickly-wooded Voirons, Mont Herbette, the Brasses, the Pointe de Miribel, and Mont d'Hirmente, succeeding each other in one chain, can only be described as a long, grassy plateau, broken here and there by an eminence or a depression. On these mountains there is abundant pasturage for cattle, the rhododendrons blossom profusely, winter brings the crowd of ski-runners to the snowy slopes, and, above all, the golden autumns have here a peculiar glory of their own. It is an ideal locality for a leisurely holiday.

The Voirons (4,856 ft.) are the last link, facing the lake, of the Alpine foot-hills of the Chablais. They run from north to south, in the form of a wooded ridge, sloping gently towards the Menoge valley and with deep gullies on the side next Geneva. The rocky skeleton of this range shows traces of erosion in the hollows of the limestone schist.

The Voirons are accessible from all sides and numerous tracks and pathways lead to the Calvaire (northern summit) or to the Pointe de Pralaire (southern summit).

To the west, the road going from La Bergue to Bons-Saint-Didier, keeps near the mountain-side, and through the villages of Lossy, St. Cergues, Boringe, and Machilly. Fine meadows with farms, orchards, and fields in a good state of cultivation extend half-way up, and then the slope becomes steeper and the forest begins. It over-runs the mountain. How pleasant, in summer, to seek the refuge of its leafy roof, through which the tempered light shimmers on butterfly-haunted glades and pathways, fastnesses of cool shade, made musical by the song of invisible birds !

The countryside is strewn with ancient strongholds. Langin, on its promontory ; further down the castles of Avully, Buffavens, and La Rochette, planted in the midst of cultivated fields and meadows, rearing their towers from among the tufted trees with the gesture of things forgotten and suddenly encountered. It was hereabouts in the depths of the vast forests of long ago, that there lived a boar, famous in story, into which, it was said, the devil had entered. The boldest hunters spoke of him with trembling ; for was he not the Evil One incarnate, seeking whom he might devour ? None could be found rash enough to stand up to the terrible brute, whose eyes, it was believed, could shoot death around him. The lord of Langin himself, a mighty hunter and courageous knight, suddenly encountering the monster, barely escaped with his life thanks to the speed of his horse and a vow made to Our Lady. " The hair of this boar " averred his lordship, " did so bristle and stand up that you would have said he had a back all covered with needles and sharp points, and his eyes did so blaze that they were brighter than live coals, and redder than drops of blood."

Climbing the Voirons from the village of Bons, on the way to Boëge by the Col de Saxel, the hamlet of Marclay is passed, and the Calvaire is reached in 1½ hours ; the " Petit Signal " immediately afterwards. An ancient chapel, founded at this

Phot. Kern

THE COL DE SAXEL
In the distance: The Môle, the Voirons and the Vergys

point in the XVth century, was destroyed by the Bernese during the war against the Chablais, and subsequently restored ; to-day it is hardly possible to see it without a pang. The doors are open, the shrine desecrated. Even to-day, however, on the arch above the choir, may be read the beautiful verse from Psalm CXXI: "*Levavi oculos meos in montes unde veniet auxilium mihi.*"

On this mountain may also be seen the Arbre à Brigitte and the Saut de la Pucelle. A legend, the counterpart of others in many lands, tells how a fair maid, pursued by a too ardent knight, sprang from a lofty rock without coming to any harm.

If oppressed by thirst, the traveller can taste the waters of a famous spring, which gurgles at the feet of some aged fir-trees; and the Fairies' Cavern still attracts visitors.

As for the " Pralaire," the lower summit, it is of easy access, either by the mountain ridge, or by climbing from La Bergue (a station on the Samoëns railway) by way of Lucinge, or, if preferred, by way of Bonne-sur-Menoge and Limargue.

On the other side of the Col de Saxel, the wooded ridge ascends, and the Col de Coux, at the foot of Mont Forchat (5,069 ft.) links the village of Habère-Poche in the Menoge valley with Draillant and Pérignier (station of the P.-L.-M.) A continuation of the Voirons, Mont d'Hermone, which runs

Phot. Boissonnas

NERNIER
On Lake Geneva

down to the Dranse, is crossed between Lullin and Orcier by the road to the Col. Under Mont d'Hermone, the little village of Reymoz, at a height of 2,789 ft., overlooks the plain in which the Dranse receives the Brevon, and this latter river skirts the mountains whose names are as follows :—The Billard (6,237 ft.) the Grande Chaux (6,064 ft.), and the Grand Rocher (4,742 ft.) This summit dominates the Col de la Balme (going from Bellevaux to Seytroux), and, on the other side, we have the Pointe de la Gay (5,909 ft.), and the Pointe de Velard (5, 923 ft.) Finally, the Col des Foillis and the Passage de Graidon descend towards St. Jean d'Aulph. On the other side of the Savoy Dranse and of the Dranse d'Abondance lies a range broken into several summits : the Pointe de Tréchauffex (5,371 ft.), Mont Ouzon (6,169 ft.), the Pointe de Cercle (5,949 ft.), the Pic de la Corne (6,817 ft.), and the Pointe de Vantaux (7,138 ft.), which rises above the lovely Lac de Montriond. More to the east, the huge massif of the Pointe de Grange towers above Abondance, at which point the Dranse makes a graceful curve. This river rises at the foot of the Pointe de Becret (7,381 ft.)

The loveliest and most typical spot in the valley is this same village of Abondance, in which the Carthusians of Sixt, from across the mountains, built a refuge on the lines of the one they had left behind. Even in the changed conditions of to-day and in spite of their conversion to alien uses, the church and ancient buildings still form an imposing architectural group. The Gothic cloister (now protected by the State) is to-day a

THONON-LES-BAINS

Phot. Boissonnas

mere ruin and offers but a melancholy spectacle to the visitor. The meadows and pine-woods surrounding the village keep the air sweet and cool in the deep hollow of this valley. Further on, the road reaches the Swiss mountains in the neighbourhood of Morgins.

Descending the valley towards Thonon, we enter a rich piece of country with thriving farms where the crops are comfortably housed in huge barns. There is sunshine enough to please the most exacting on the road that mounts to the Col du Corbier, linking the valley of Abondance to that of St. Jean d'Aulph. A first-rate highway runs through this valley from end to end, leading to the village of Morzine and to the Lac de Montriond, whose blue waters reflect the sombre green of the mountains. The road leads back in one direction towards the Savoy Dranse, while in the other it pushes forward to Les Gets, a delightful village, surrounded by meadows, and ends in the Col of the same name, subsequently dropping again towards the valley of the Giffre at Taninges. From the Voirons, therefore, following the several courses of the branches of the Dranse, we have made a complete circular tour, and find ourselves once more upon the high-road from Annemasse to Samoëns, which we had left at Bonne-sur-Menoge. In the meantime, between this last locality and Taninges, we find three valleys: that of Menoge, with the large villages of Boëge, Villard, and Habère-Poche; then the valley of Bogève, a very short one; and finally a valley both longer and of more varied character, that, namely, of the Risse, which runs from St. Jeoire to the Col de Jambaz (here, on the other slope, the valley of the Brevon begins). The mountains dominating this

Phot. Boissonnas

The Valley of the Dranse

Phot. Boissonnas

AT ST. JEAN D'AULPH : RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF NOTRE-DAME D'AULPH

Founded by the Benedictines of Solesmes in 1094

Phot. Boissonnas

THE LAC DE MONTRIOND (3,442 FT.)

valley are Mont d'Herbette, the Pointe des Brasses (4,945 ft.), the Pointe de Miribel (5,205 ft.), and the Pointe d'Hirmente (5,270 ft.) On the left bank of the Risse the Pointe de Fongliats stands out, and to the north, as we go down towards the valley of the Giffre, the much loftier summits of Chalune (8,920 ft.) and the Roc d'Enfer (7,348 ft.) Other heights to be noted here, are : the Pointe d'Uble, the Pointe du Haut-Fleuri, and lastly, the Véron de Marcelly, immediately above Taninges.

All these mountains are easily accessible, whether one starts from Bogève or St Jeoire, Taninges or Mieussy. Or perhaps the reader might prefer to think of spending a Saturday night in some chalet among the " fragrant hay of the mountains," as the poets call it—the uncomfortable, prickly hay that gets into your hair and down your neck and everywhere, and harbours a whole world of voracious insects !

How memories crowd upon us, thinking of the nights we have passed even so, in those Alpine chalets ! How thankful we were to find shelter, even of the poorest, and rest for our weary bones. The chalet marks the end of the first day's march, which always in itself seems endless. On clear nights, how the sight of the gleaming roof in the distance would make us pluck up heart and step out, briskly ! But when there was no moon ; or when the mist or rain hid the shapes of things ;

Phot. Boissonnas

THE ROC D'ENFER (7,349 FT.)

Phot. Boissonnas

General View of Morzine

then we would go blindly forward in the darkness and lose time and all sense of direction. Seeking the path, we would stumble into a brook ; or be brought up against a rock, when we had meant to enter a cow-house. At times, on reaching our chalet, we would find it buried deep in snow ; to be entered, if at all, only by the chimney ! Or perhaps the door would be fastened for the night ; when we should have to put up with the out-house, and a shake-down made out of planks and any odds and ends of bedding we could find. So, with our knapsacks for pillows, we would fall asleep, and dream sweet dreams ! At other times, we would find the chalet open to be sure, but destitute of hay ; providing merely the shelter of a roof and an empty fire-place. Whereupon we would kindle a fire and stretch ourselves on the bare earth, getting as near the warmth as possible, content to be frozen on one side, so be it we were roasted on the other ! Every now and then we would turn over, like so many chops upon the grill !

There are not a few tourists of feeble moral sense, who think nothing of forcing their way into closed houses and making shameless use of any provisions they can lay hands on ; who will break open the cupboard, hack the table with their knives, and in the morning go off, leaving behind them an open

Phot. Kern

LE PRAZ-DE-LYS

In the background : Végine ; the Pointe de Chalune (8,920 ft.) ; the Roc d'Enfer (7,348 ft.) ; the Pointe d'Uble (6,426 ft.)

Phot. Kern

THE LAC DE ROY

In the background : the Pointe de Chalune (8,920 ft.) ; the Roc d'Enfer (7,348 ft.) and the Pointe d'Uble (6,426 ft.)

door, through which the wind, rain, and snow of a whole winter will find entry. "Yes" a countryman once said to me, "there is a kind of tourist—and there is too many of him—who is no better than a robber and a savage." And I could not but agree.

It is better to share the hospitality of the chalets in the summer season, when flocks and shepherds are gathered together there. The climber is generally a welcome visitor with his news from the great towns, his papers, and his tobacco - pouch or cigarettes. And in the evening there will be talk round the fire, or on a grassy knoll outside ; and with your last pipe reeking into the darkness, you look up at the stars and at the sombre mountain masses on which the rising moon will presently put a halo of golden light. In the sheds the cattle are bellowing, and the jingle of their bells has at times the rythmical movement of a chime. Little by little, the ethereal radiance fills the valley, flooding the chalets, invading the near-by Alp, on which the Calvary stands. The black shadow of the guardian cross is printed on the moonlit ground. And so to bed while :

Phot. Kern

TANINGES
The Old Chapel

Seul, le Christ veille ! Son calvaire
Emerge du plateau glacé,
Les monts en silhouette claire
Découpent leur écran dressé.

(Ch. Gos).

An excursion to the neighbourhood of Miribel, Hirmente, and Mont d'Herbette should be no occasion for hurry, and a leisurely acquaintanceship should be sought with its meadows,

Phot. Boissonnas

TANINGES
The Old Bridge

villages, and hamlets, its wonderful fields of rhododendrons, and its limpid little lakes.

In winter no one forgets to take his skis with him for the ascent of the Brasses from Bogève. The slopes and undulations of these mountains are singularly favourable to the ski-runner, who can practice on them the most agile and supple evolutions of his favourite sport. The countryside has a wonderful charm in autumn, when the mists hang about the fields, when the colchicums are in flower and the road to Viuz-en-Sallaz is strewn with the leaves of the pear-tree, smooth, red, and edged with black, while higher up on the mountain, the larches are beginning to turn yellow.

Then comes the season of sadness. The sky is of lead, the meadows empty, the houses shuttered, and only the trickle of a fountain breaks the profound silence.

The road to the Brasses makes a great curve as it comes down towards the village of La Tour, while another track leads to St. Jeoire by way of Mont d'Herbette. Here we catch the last train for Annemasse ; and find it crowded with a joyous, singing, boisterous company. We are unmistakeably in the land of the gay and free-spoken Gaul, and we jolt and jog along, to the music of the wheels.

But let no evil be spoken of this Samoëns train! It is our very indispensable servant; what indeed should we do without it? It has brought us on our way from the Voirons to Viuz, at the foot of the Môle; and we shall be still further in its debt if we ever explore the Pointe de Marcelly, or that of the Haut-Fleuri, or visit the shores of the Lac de Roy, near the pasturage of Praz-de-Lys.

Above Mieussy, are the noble walls of Chalune and the Roc d'Enfer, peaks vigorously outlined against the sky. At the village of Mieussy the track skirts a torrent which tumbles downward in a fine fall, runs thence past the hamlet of Les Mouilles, and is merged in the Col de la Ramaz. We are now fairly on the mountain-side. But the day is rainy, and the mists divide only to give us glimpses of monotonous, grassy tracts, on which we can hear the bleating of invisible sheep. Vague shapes loom up in the obscurity; groups of fir-trees, chalets. We are at Sommens. The mist wraps the world in a blanket, and the ascent to the summit, up some very steep slopes, is accomplished slowly, in mingled rain and snow.

Mieussy: Doorway of the Church

Phot. Kern

La Roche-sur-Foron
In the background: The Môle (6,132 ft.)

CHAPTER IV

AROUND LA ROCHE-SUR-FORON

The mountains of La Roche have an especial attraction for anyone staying at Geneva, and for two reasons. They are, in the first place, within easy reach of a day's excursion, and secondly, they provide the climber with scrambles both easy and difficult.

Overlooking the village of Orange (to go no further), there may be seen, above the forests, the steep slopes of Ballajoux or Mont de Coux (5,926 ft.), which is the bastion thrown out by the continuous mountain-wall formed by the succession of heights known respectively as Sous-Dine (6,571 ft.), Roche Parnal (5,775 ft.), and the Pointe de Taine. These, it must be confessed, are but minor excursions, but they are sure to be enjoyed.

It is a delightful country for a ramble at any season of the year. In summer, chalets and pastures are alive with the

Phot. Granier

SKI-ING AT BALLAJOUX
In the distance : The Chain of the Vergys

comings and goings of men and beasts, autumn brings its glow-tints, and winter its snow and ocean of mist, enveloping the feet of the mountains. The tide of rolling vapour threatens to submerge the high rocks that stand stark and dark above their margin of snow, fantastic apparitions against the azure sky. But spring is the ideal season, when life reawakens and the whole rejoicing countryside bursts into flower.

Who has not known one of those early mornings in Geneva when travellers take the road in the first grey light of dawn ? The streets are empty, and there is a clatter of nailed boots on the pavement. In the garden shrubberies the birds begin their early song, and the chestnuts that line the walks are heavy with flowers and foliage. Mountaineering parties keep turning up, all of them moving in the same direction. At the Eaux-Vives Station there is infinite bustle : a multitude of travellers, bound for Savoy ; mere youths, elderly men, young girls, all with knapsack on back and ice-axe in hand. The badges of climbing clubs are proudly worn on many a thread-bare jacket ; and here and there an old weather-stained hat, or a girl's red handkerchief, lends a note of picturesqueness. All these people, for all their differences, are unmistakeably bound together by a common devotion, by that love of the mountains which creates, better than any law, a noble spirit of harmony and goodwill. . .

As the train rattles along, the panorama is unfolded on the screen framed by the window of the carriage, like the moving pictures of a cinematograph. The Môle, violet-tinted, intersects the line of snow which connects the Dent du Midi with the

Phot. Kern

CHALET AT COUX

Ballajoux (5,926 ft.) and Les Frettes (6,249 ft.); Roche Parnal (5,775 ft.) and Sous-Dine (6,571 ft.)

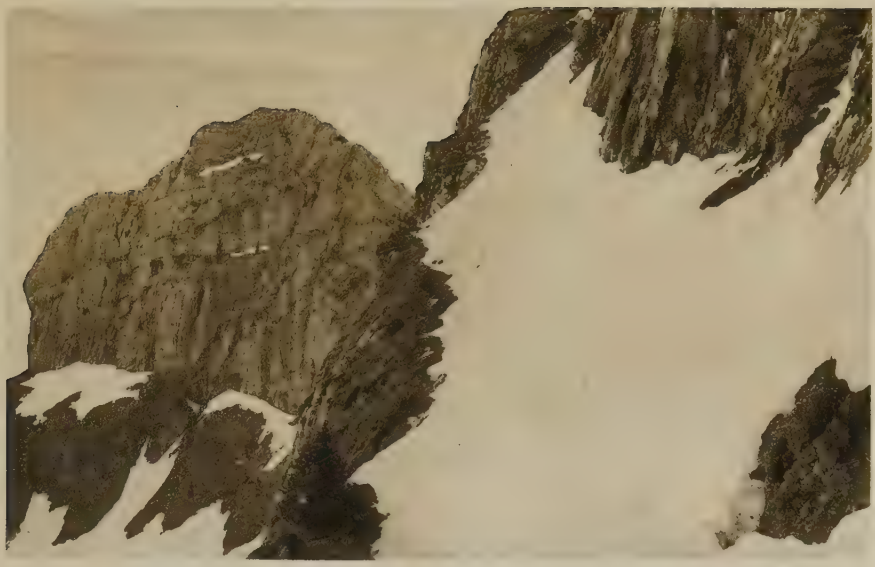
Phot. Granier

ROCHE PARNAL (5,775 FT.)

Buet and the wonderfully majestic Aiguille Verte, in its halo of light. In the fields, the sorrel bends under its crimson clusters, and the early larks climb the sky, pouring out their shrill songs. Whither, we ask, listening to them, whither so high ? And we fall to humming the song written in honour of this little bird by the mountaineers of the neighbourhood of Thônes :

Na brav' aluiëta
Matin s'te lèvâ..
Drè ô diên lé niole
La pour'è monta..
Lè, on la parchvivé
S'on la vëie pâ..
Lè, on l'êntêndiné
Tirlini chantâ
Lè, l'fassé d'prêchiré
Pe lo don danâ..
Pwè su çlà nohivé
L'é vnin s'arposa..
La branché tê sëta,
L'ézé è tomba..
Na pour' aluïetà
T'é to bin fê mâ ?..
De m'sé rontu l'âla
D'è lè éou cassâ..
V'pi dè çli abrô
Pé mè consolâ..
Awé d'boqë rôse
De l'e entara..

" A blithe little lark
One morning got up.
High into the clouds
The poor little thing climbed up.
There you could hear it,
If you could not see.
There you could hear it,
Trilling its trills.
There it poured out prayers
For all lost souls.
Then it came down to rest
On this old walnut-tree.
The branch was dry :
The bird got a fall.
Poor little lark,
Are you really so hurt ?
—I have shattered my wing,
I have broken my neck.—
At the foot of this tree,
To console myself,
I buried it,
And put roses on its grave."



Phot. Kern

ROCHE PARNAL (5,775 FT.) AND SOUS-DINE (6,571 FT.)

We are now within sight of the Brezon (Pointe d'Andey), the chain of the Vergys, Roche Parnal, Sous-Dine. The train stops ; we are at La Roche-sur-Foron. The little town is hardly awake. The church bells are ringing, and a sound of psalm-singing comes from the seminary. An *abbé* passes, a *religieuse* opens a window ; there is a flavour of the cloister in the contemplative peacefulness of the street in which St. Francis of Sales must often have walked as a child. The Foron torrent has hollowed out a ravine which girdles the town on the side of the mountains. There are old ramparts enclosing shady gardens, and massive roofs telling of ancestral homes. Over all towers a rock, on which stand the ruins of a castle of the Counts of Geneva, who from the XIIth century were the lords paramount of the town. The steeple of the church, with its quaint outline, sparkles in the morning sun ; a spirit of joyousness bursts forth on every hand.

The ascent to the village of Orange is made by paths skirting well-to-do farms, and zig-zagging under a thick canopy of foliage, past cultivated fields and orchards. A breath of coolness comes from a running brook, and the air is full of

strong vegetable odours. A little girl in a scarlet cloak (like Little Red Riding Hood) trips along, carrying a bunch of lilies-of-the-valley : by that same token we remember we are in May, " the merry month of May." Let us hope the little maid is not going to encounter the devouring wolf at her grand-mother's. . . . Leaning on his stick, the postman comes towards me, and I recognise the same man who in the days of the great War used to go the rounds from door to door with the news so eagerly—and so fearfully—awaited by everybody. In those days, the French-blue uniforms could be seen in the farm-yards ; lads on leave from the Front. To-day the ex-service men are at work out there in the fields, planting potatoes or guiding the gleaming plough-share as it turns the red soil aside ; or else only their names survive, inscribed on one of those too numerous War Memorials to be seen in every parish since 1919. . . Orange is rather a hamlet than a village. Smoke goes up from the chimneys, dogs bark, a lonely pigeon drinks at the fountain ; a villager approaches, the bird takes to flight. . . On the road a group of woodmen keep busily at work, while an old fellow, bowed down by years, looks on.

As we mount higher, the walls of Sous-Dine and Roche Parnal loom up larger, while the chalets of Balme diminish to mere specks. Between Sous-Dine and Roche Parnal, a sort of breach forms a pass, cleaving the mountain-wall, which may be crossed by two tracks, both rather steep however : the Saut-du-Berger and the Pas-de-la-Truie, names redolent, in an equal degree, of the gossip familiar to all acquainted with mountain districts. . . . Making our way round the magnificent cliff which springs up, in a single bound, from the meadowland, we reach without difficulty a grassy pass, from which Ballajoux, the summit, is attained. A third pass separates Roche Parnal from the Pointe de Taine, where the half melted snow is still piled in masses. We cross it and are astonished to find a new landscape opening out before us. The slopes and gullies of the Pointe de Taine terminate in the Alpine pasturage of that name, which still wears a look of wintry melancholy in these early days of spring : opposite it rises a wooded mountain, Mont Noir, and in the distance, the Vergys and the Chaîne des Aravis present a chaos of snow, mists, and vague undulations. To our right the grass shows withered and yellow on the slope of Roche Parnal ; further off, Mont Sous-Dine, bristling with rock-shelvings, rifts and couloirs, and chequered in places by

Phot. Kern

VALLEY OF THE PETIT-BORNAND AND THE ROCHERS DE LESCHAUX (6,365 FT.)

Phot. Kern

VALLEY OF THE PETIT-BORNAND
The Brezon (6,165 ft.) and the Rochers de Leschaux (6,365 ft.)

limestone seams, stands in savage isolation above the chalet and pasturage of Crêt de Lebas.

A shaft of silvery, pearl-grey light penetrates the clouds, glides over the rocks, and sets all the ponds and brooklets sparkling. . . . Higher up, the deep green sward is starred with the violet and blue of pansies and gentians, and a few daphnes hide under the thickets. Down here, the yellow of the buttercups, which appear in myriads, is the only cheerful and hearty note in the landscape.

A tiny path, winding through the woods, descends to the valley of Petit Bornand, a village lying immediately beneath us in the hollow. Here a new vista discovers a countryside teeming in possibilities for the visitor. For those mountains overlooking the Borne are likewise well-known to climbers from Geneva. On the highway which follows the course of the torrent a slow succession of black specks denotes some village festival, and a monotonous pealing of bells can be heard from the steeples. . . . Above the village, the road to Cenise ascends towards the Pointe de Jalouvre. Nearer at hand, the Rochers de Leschaux plunge vertically to the right bank of the

torrent ; and a far-away glimpse can be had of the upland pasturage of Solaison behind the rocky spur of the Brezon. Our road does not lead us across the valley ; instead, it descends very steeply, runs along the left bank of the Borne through meadows and woods, and thence reascends by way of the Rocher du Cenaillon, to drop down finally on St. Laurent. It is warm up here on the final ridge and the air is heavy ; what is there for it but to take a doze ! . . . .

At St. Pierre-de-Rumilly
The old covered bridge

Once more the familiar plain lies before me, with the steeple of St. Laurent springing up above the orchards, and further off, the steeples of St. Sixt, St. Pierre (de Rumilly) and St. Maurice, near La Roche. At a cross-road, a number of large, white umbels surround a tottering crucifix, which some pious hand has tried to save by wedging a willow-branch between the two uprights of rotten wood ; and the branch has blossomed, as it were symbolically. . . . Driven by the squall, the mists troop down from the mountain, and straggle across the sky, hanging heavily overhead ; the wind howls through the apple-blossom and a rain of petals spreads a white carpet on the muddy road.

On my way back by the road to La Roche, I meet, in the arbour of a little café, Fanfoué d'Arbusigny, the popular fiddler, well-known to the Genevese.

He had been driven by the rain, like myself, into this harbour of refuge, and seated there, in melancholy mood, with his pint on the table before him, he listened to a player-piano strumming out the tune of *C'est mon homme* and *Madelon*, with a mighty din of drums and castanets, while the couples gyrated

in each other's arms. Fanfoué had stopped smoking ; his pipe was out, his pleasure in it spoiled. " How d'ye do, M'sieu Fanfoué? So there you are ? How goes the fiddle ? All well at home, I hope ? " I plied him with questions to drive away his black dog. " Yes, yes ; we're all well. Our cow, she's got a calf, but Lord ! listen to that " and he pointed to the piano " It makes me ill, all that machinery and those outlandish tunes. There's no dancing to them ; you can only walk. Give me a quick-time polka or a gig. There's dances for you, if you like ; but *that* stuff " ! And he gave a shrug of contempt, spat on the floor, and resumed : " Yes, things are changing, and we can't help it. A man must be a philosopher these days, and I'm thinkin' I've the makings of one, myself. The truest things, I'm thinkin', are said in afforists."

" What was that, in . . . ?" " Yes, in afforists ; as for example : ' Women's promises are like a bit of ice soaked in water.' And then there are axles and paraducks, like this : ' Love is a sweetmeat to be sucked, but never to be swallowed.' " " I see : you mean aphorisms, axioms, and paradoxes."

" Call them then what you will ; all's one for that. But look here, I'll recite you one of my own poems that I put together when I was a lad. Perhaps you'll be able to use it one of these days in your writings. I was in love when I made it."

Fanfoué took a drink, wiped his moustache with the back of his hand, and began :—

Quand je vois la Philomène
Avec ses vaches t'a bras nus !
Je me dis crébleu que j'laime,
Mon pauvre Fanfoué t'es bien fichu.

Quand j'suis au cabaret
Devant mon verre d'absinthe
J'me dis qu'çà me paraît
Que la Philomène est une sainte.

J'suis ni tortu ni bossu
J'suis pas plus mal qu'u n'autre,
Mais quand j'la vois t'a bras nus
J'la cours après comme une apôtre.

Mais la bougresse est difficile
Elle veut pas faire d'accordérons
Tant qu'j'aurai pas d'billets d'mille
De quoi la faire un gros jupon.

* * * *

Phot. Kern

The Chapelle des Evaux

Comme la lune dans l'hydrogène
Couratte après le soleil,
Tu verras bien ma Philomène
Tu t'en mordras les orteils !

And he emptied his glass with an emphatic : " Here's to your very good health." He is a right good fellow, and is at his best in his blue blouse, with his fiddle under his chin, scraping for all he is worth, to the accompaniment of the accordeon. When he plays at his village festival, he puts on his best clothes, and I can tell you the petticoats are very soon twirling round, like balloons, in a cloud of dust !

" When shall we see you in Geneva ? " " Don't know : in the autumn, when they buy potatoes." On the threshold I stretch out my hand to feel if it is still raining ; whereupon "There now," says he, with a sly smile, "you've got the very action of the bronze general in your town, stuck up there in front of the theatre, and never done wanting to know if it's raining ! "

" Well, pleased to have met you." And we part, both of us the better, I hope, for the encounter.

Fanfoué d'Arbusigny

Phot. Kern

ON THE PLATEAU OF CENISE : LE BARGY (7,564 FT.) AND THE POINTE DU MIDI (7,664 FT.)

CHAPTER V

THE MOUNTAINS OF THE VALLEY OF LE PETIT BORNAND

THIS sharply defined mountain group is contained within a triangle, of which the valley of the Arve may be considered the base, while one side would be represented by the Borne (valley of Le Petit Bornand) and the other by the valley of the Reposoir (with an extension to Le Grand Bornand). The west side of this triangle is formed of a mountain-chain, running from Scionzier to Entremont, whose summits are as follows : the Bargy, with its lofty rocks (there is an excellent view of them from the train to Cluses) ; the Vergys, including the Pointe du Midi (7,664 ft.), the Pointe Blanche (7,998 ft.), the Jalouvre and Mont de Mayse, the Pointe de Lessy, the Pointe des Tours ; and the long ridge of the Rochers de la Forclaz (6,190 ft.) In the nearer foreground, the Brezon or Pointe d'Andey (6,165 ft.) dominates Bonneville, while the

Phot. Kern

In the Valley of Le Petit Bornand

Rochers de Leschaux occupy the centre of the triangle. In this district lie the pretty villages of Brizon, Pincru, Mont-Saxonnex, besides upland pastures, such as those of Solaison or of Cenise, and little mountain lakes.

The *massif* is watered by the Borne, which has one source on a slope of the Pointe de Lessy, and another at the Col des Annes, the two torrents joining forces at Le Grand Bornand and making an abrupt change of direction near St. Jean-de-Sixt ; so that instead of falling into the Lake of Annecy, the Borne, for a matter of twenty miles, flows in a deep channel of its own making, round the base of the Vergys, the Rochers de Leschaux and the Brezon, finally emptying itself into the Arve.

" The gorge of the Borne," says Henry Bordeaux " is crossed above St. Pierre-de-Rumilly. The valley is beautifully green here, with extensive pastures, feeding herds of dark-skinned cattle, cultivated fields where the corn is allowed to stand late, and groves of beech and fir. In the depths flows a torrent (the Nant or Borne), swollen by hidden springs, whose monotonous song bears the traveller company." . . .

The valley of Le Petit Bornand is now a busy highway swarming with motor-cars. These may be avoided by taking the old highway, or the path running along the left bank (we

CENISE AND THE VERGYS
Pointe Blanche and the Pic de Jalouvre

Phot. Granier

CENISE IN WINTER

In the background : The Tournette (7,733 ft.), The Rochers de Lachat (6,655 ft.) and The Pointe de Lessy.

have already explored it). Hamlets—and drinking booths—break the monotony of the journey : Termine, Saxiat, Le Villars, and lastly Le Petit Bornand, the most important village in the district, which sees every Saturday night crowds of climbers on their way to Cenise or the Vergys.

A final twist, and the plateau of Cenise widens out ; the chalets and houses of the hamlet come into view. It only remains to find a hay-loft in which to stretch our limbs, and a bite of supper beside a good fire. Then, with our pipes all alight, we shall evoke the memory of Clopt, the fruiterer as he then was, who used to have his home on this mountain, where he reigned, to all intents and purposes, lord paramount. His chalet was more of an inn than a fruit-store ; for he kept open house, and loved to hear a merry song and the clink of the canakin. Clopt was no man's man. He followed his own pleasure, which was to roam these heights ; and with the mountaineering lore thus acquired, he was known to many as the friendly guide who could show them the beauties of the country ; while to others he was a good fellow who made up pretty little nosegays of edelweiss for sale. But the real man only came out on those poaching expeditions of his, when under cover of a black night he was wont to make across the border, by way

Phot. Granier

THE SUMMIT OF THE JALOUVRE

of some hidden pass, into the neighbouring valley, with a heavy game-bag on his shoulder. . .

Clopt is dead, the war has come and gone, and influenza has taken toll of the pasturage of Cenise; and many an erst familiar face is seen no more. But memory will still be speaking of old days and old friends to the traveller who revisits the village streets of Garta or Rogardien, or wanders on the shores of the tiny lake of Cenise, with the mountains looking down at their own faces in the water, and at that solitary cow, who mislikes their shadows, if one may judge by her broken-hearted bellowing. Perhaps she has dreams and memories of her own, and her own fashion of getting rid of them.

From afar comes the song of a shepherd, and as the well-known melody floats to my ears, I recognise a song that used to be a great favourite at Cenise in days gone by :

Là-haut, sur la montagne,
J'ai entendu pleurer,
Oh ! c'est la voix de ma compagne
Je m'en vais la consoler.
Les moutons dans la plaine
Sont en danger du loup,
Et vous et moi, jeune bergère,
Nous sommes en danger d'amour.
Oh ! qu'avez-vous la belle ?
Qu'avez-vous à pleurer ?
Je pleure, je pleure sur la tendresse
Regret de vous avoir aimé.
Aimer n'est pas un crime
Dieu ne nous le défend pas,
Faudrait avoir le cœur de marbre
La belle pour ne vous aimer pas.
Les moutons vivent de l'herbe,
Les papillons des fleurs,
Et vous et moi, jeune bergère,
Nous ne vivons que de langueurs.
Il y a trois choses au monde
Trois choses à désirer,
D'or et d'argent en abondance
Des jeunes filles à marier !

Phot. Kern

THE ARÊTE VERTE, POINTE BLANCHE, AND THE JALOUVRE
(from the Col de la Glacière)

Before undertaking the ascent of the Vergys above Cenise, with the descent on Pralong to follow, we shall explore the country, or rather the vast plateau which we have now reached and which ends abruptly above Bonneville in the spurs of the Brezon. But, between the Brezon and Cenise, stretches a barren, rocky ridge called the Rochers de Leschaux. The very appearance of these rocks causes a nostalgic shiver in the beholder. " They are, as it were, the ghastly skeleton on which grass, trees, flowers, and all that makes the kindly flesh of a mountain, have never grown. And " continues A. Tonneau, in *Alpages et Sommets* " the oldest shepherds will tell you how they have heard from their grandfathers that once upon a time the *Rochers des Chaux* were covered with a noble forest in which the birds warbled all day long, and squirrels frolicked among the lofty firs and beeches. But one day flames burst forth in this forest and a frightful panic ensued, birds, squirrels, foxes all taking flight in terror. For weeks and weeks the fire burned, and when at length the cloud of smoke drifted away, nothing was found of the flourishing woods but smouldering cinders. And with the forest have departed the winged denizens whose songs were so pleasant to hear ; the bubbling springs have dried

Phot. Kern

LE BARGY (7,564 FT.), AND THE POINTE DU MIDI
In the distance: the Dents du Midi

up and the bare limestone ribs are left in their nakedness. Flowers, mosses, sweet odours—all are gone ; rocks and ashes alone remain. The old shepherds saw in all this the anger of the sylvan spirits who had thus avenged the felling of certain sacred trees by imprudent woodmen; a younger generation, more matter-of-fact in outlook, is inclined to find sufficient cause for the calamity in the badly extinguished fire of some careless shepherd."

Among these bald rocks, despair might be enthroned. On the other side of them lies the pasturage nearest to Cenise, that of Solaison. Here, once more, we are among the dwellings of men, and see around us great herds of cattle. Fine meadows lead to the top of the Brezon, sloping upwards not too steeply. The richness of the flora here is well-known among botanists.

The old world still lingers in this neighbourhood and is singularly unabashed when confronted with the new. M. A. Tonneau relates how he and some fellow-travellers, botanising on these slopes, were hailed by an old shepherd who showed a kindly interest in their hobby, and genially explained that he was well acquainted with the harmless cranks who went about gathering flowers " as a defence against witchcraft."

Lying there at one's ease, one loses all count of time in wonder and admiration. In front are stretched the Alps, a multitude of summits ranged one above another, each with its halo of light, and all leading the eye up to the crowning glory of Mont Blanc. On our left are the Môle, Chalune, the Roc d'Enfer, Marcelly ; on the right, Sous-Dine, Ballajoux, the Tournette, and in front, the Aravis. A tinkle of cow-bells comes up to us in the soft breeze, and a perfume of flowers, rising like incense into the blue vault of heaven. No wonder that Ruskin, apostle of the religion of beauty, should have fallen so deeply in love with this spot that he proposed buying a piece of the mountain in order to live here in uninterrupted contemplation. The conditions of purchase laid down by the cautious peasantry were unacceptable and Ruskin had to give up his plan. Away down below, the spreading valley of the Arve displays its rich champaigns, its market-towns, its villages planted on both banks of the river, which flows, sinuous and silvery, at the foot of the Môle.

The wild Arve, escaping from its glaciers, emerges from the narrow defile hollowed out by its own fury, through the portal commanded by the town of Cluses. Thereafter it becomes the broad and stately river in whose leaden waters the blurred reflections of the two shores of a province are mingled ; and so flows onwards to the Rhone, always keeping at a safe distance from Geneva, " like a shy mountaineer, afraid of trusting himself in the haunts of men." (to quote Léandre Vaillat).

To realize the full extent and range of the ridge of the Vergys, it should be viewed from the Brezon, when it will be seen to include three summits, which look for all the world like three towers placed for the defence of that other prodigious mountain-wall—the Bargy. These summits are : the Pointe Blanche (in the centre) and, at equal distances from it, to left and right, the Pointe du Midi and the Pic de Jalouvre, where edelweiss is to be found.

From here one can see the whole structure of the mountain, and follow it in all its detail, such as, for example, the path going from Cenise to the upper pasturage of Sosay, the so-called " Escalier des Vaches," or the steep slopes of smooth sward leading to the Col du Rasoir. Or, again, there is the track known as the " Cravate " or the " Corraterie," by which the summit may be reached without undue difficulty. And if on your way down you should have a mind to " do " the Pointe

Phot. Kern

LAC BÉNIT AND THE DENTS DU MIDI

Blanche once more, you have only to retrace your steps over the " Rasoir," when a series of stony slopes and something of a scramble will take you quickly and triumphantly to the top. In the depths below, flickers of sunshine play over the vale of Soty, and the hamlet of Cenise appears a tiny cluster on the wide bosom of the pasturage ; while that shadow in the distance is the ridge of Belafrasse, whence lies the way to the Pointe du Midi. . . . Further off are the giant cliffs which lead to the Col de l'Encarne, and, more to the left, to the Bargy. The Lac Bénit, a limpid blue mirror amid the surrounding green pastures lies immediately below on the one hand, and, on the other, can be seen the villages of Mont-Saxonnex and Pincru (at which point the roads from Bonneville converge.)

There is a fine road as far as Mont-Saxonnex, where it dwindles to a track which follows the course of the Bronze, and leads through forests, finally attacking an old glacial moraine, from the top of which there is a view over the Lac Bénit. Right opposite are the splendid and strangely twisted cliffs of the Bargy. The faults in those rocks have a vertical run which presently begins to curve, with a movement like that of spokes of a wheel, till they become horizontal towards the Col de l'Encarne. On the other side of the Col lies the valley of the Reposoir, with the village of Pralong and the Chartreuse. Other passes link up this valley with that of the Petit Bornand ; the Col du Rasoir (leading from Cenise to the village of Chenaillon) ; the Col de Lessy, the Col de la Forclaz, and the Col de Thonay (leading to Entremont).

On Mont Saxonnex

Phot. Granier

SUMMIT OF THE POINTE BLANCHE, AND VIEW OF MONT BLANC AND THE ARAVIS

CHAPTER VI

THE CHAIN OF THE ARAVIS

THIS is the last barrier confronting us before Mont Blanc in this region. Several summits indicate its culminating points: Mont Méry or the Pointe d'Areu (8,163 ft.) the Pointe Percée, dominating Sallanches, (9,029 ft.), the Grande Forclaz (8,091 ft.), followed by the Tête Pelouse, the Rocher de la Balmaz, and the Pointe des Aravis (above the Col des Chapelles, over which runs the Thônes-Flumet high-road). On the other side, the chain is continued by the Rochers de l'Etale and Mont Charvin, the Dent de Cons and the Belle-Etoile above Albertville.

After Scionzier, the valley which ascends to Pralong and the Chartreuse du Reposoir is closed abruptly by a curtain of hills in which are included the two lesser heights of the Tête d'Aufferand and the Pointe d'Almet, this curtain being itself

crossed by the Col des Annes (below the Pointe Percée) and that of the Grand Bornand (below the Pic de Jalouvre). Here, a number of becks and torrents flow down the two slopes of the mountain, forming the Foron on the side next to Pralong, and, on the other, the Borne, which makes a loop round Mont Lachat, a peak standing apart between the Pointe des Tours and the Grande Forclaz. Once more we are in the region of forests, and lush meadows, and fields where summer will see the blithe brown mowers, swaying to the rhythm of the gleaming scythes. Smiling hamlets look out from among the trees ; and from all sides comes the murmur of a cheerful and busy life. M. Revon has thus described Grand Bornand, the most important village of this country-side :

" The houses have been built with an eye to the comfort of the cattle as much as to that of their owners, and are intended to provide shelter, during the long winters, not only for the farmer and his family, but also for considerable quantities of the fruits of the soil : a triple purpose reflected in a peculiar structure which has given them the added distinction of a strangely capricious style of their own, a style practically unaltered by the lapse of centuries. Strangled between their narrow walls, the streets broaden out again unexpectedly. The open spaces are irregular and hilly. Rustic fountains discharge their water into troughs sunk in the bed of a spring, through gutters fashioned out of the trunk of a tree. Herdsmen in outlandish costumes wander up and down, ringing their bells to recall their straying sheep and goats. Bare-legged village maidens, in short brightly coloured petticoats, go bustling about their work, with loose locks and fluttering neckerchiefs : while their elders stand in solemn conclave, wagging their heads at each other, under those broad-brimmed hats which they seem to wear year in, year out, sleeping or waking. The whole scene is one of a busy pastoral life."

This picture may be supplemented by a description from another pen. Henry Bordeaux has just left Grand Bornand and is on his way to the Col de la Colombière :

" Evening had come, one of those September evenings when nature is absorbed in the all-too-brief joy of fulfilment. I crossed the torrent and plunged into the narrow glen which forces a way through the fir-plantations of the slopes. And as the slow twilight crept over the hill-sides, I stood still to watch. At the other end of the valley, the sun went down behind the

Phot. Granier

IN THE CHAIN OF THE ARAVIS

"Gendarme" on the western ridge of the Pointe de Balme.

mountains in the neighbourhood of Annecy, lighting up, as he sank, the windows of a chalet. Pastures, woods, and village were steeped in an infinite peace. But I soon turned from this view to the other. The far end of the glen rests on the chain of the Aravis, a ridge consisting of a string of irregular and barren summits of hard rock, of which the highest is that pinnacle of Pointe Percée which towers above the Chartreuse du Reposoir. And now—a miracle ! A gradual splendour spread over all that chain of solid limestone, as white and hard, almost, as a glacier hung in mid-air,—spread and lit it from end to end, between the dark forests shouldering it on either hand. In another minute it was blazing like a Roman candle, red, violet, claret-coloured. On it, every last particle of the day's heat from the uttermost verge of the horizon was concentrated. It became, and remained for some time, of a deep purple. Even as we looked, the moon rode into the lists, between the lesser powers disputing the mastery of the world. The glowing colours dimmed, grew paler, finally faded utterly, as if wiped out by some invisible hand. Vanquished in his turn, Pointe Percée, last of all the other peaks, surrendered. A soft twilight covered the face of things. Bright patches of colchicum and purple clover still showed for a few minutes longer on the darkling earth. And here and there, in the windows of chalets scattered on the mountain-side, little flames of light sprang up, heralding night and sleep. Early next morning, I struck the road for the Col de la Colombière, on my way down to the Chartreuse.

" Before me as I walked, I could see the giant mountains shaking off slumber, stretching their mighty limbs, and skipping forward in a white mist, which was presently dissipated by the growing light of day. And as the light grew, it drank up the dew-drops, that infinite multitude of glow-worms clinging to the leaves and meadow grasses. Signs of human habitation grew few and far between. The hamlet of Chenaillon is the last to be met with, before reaching the summit of the pass."

On the other side, the descent is effected on the village of Pralong, where the Carthusians built their retreat in 1151. The monastery fell on evil days, and it needed the energy of a monk from Provence, Jean d'Espagne, to set the order of the disciples of St. Bruno on its feet again in Pralong. He resolved to take up his abode there, and in reply to all objections, would say that while others had made trial of the wilderness for a few

Phot. Granier

View from the Summit of Mont Charvin (7,920 ft.)

Phot. Granier

The Col des Aravis in Winter

days only, he would live all the years of his life there. He was really the first Prior of the Chartreuse du Reposoir, and died in the odour of sanctity.

The White Fathers inhabited their solitude for many years, in the strict observance of the severe rules of their order. But the fluctuations of the political world drove them forth, never to return ; and the buildings alone remain, still attracting visitors as an interesting example of the concrete realisation of an idea in a logically planned architectural group.

The Chartreuse has been described by Henry Bordeaux in the following passage :—" It lies behind the green pool whose waters are scarcely to be distinguished from the smooth turf of the adjacent slopes, spreading out its walls lengthwise, with a bell-turret or two showing above the numerous roofs of its various buildings and cells. The dark fir-trees make a background for the white face of the old sanctuary, peacefully at rest there, in the shadow of the chain of the Aravis, whose highest summit, Pointe Percée, gets its name from an opening in its peak through which daylight penetrates.

" The Chartreuse, however, merits closer acquaintanceship. The approach to it lies through the village of Pralong, and leads upwards through an avenue of chestnuts, beeches, and Judas-trees, with their clusters of red berries. The leaves, for all their autumnal yellow, still cling to the trees, clothing them in gold from head to foot. A stone basin receives the water of a double fountain in the centre of the little square, between the fish-pond and the main block of buildings. On the façade of the latter, I can decipher the inscription: "*Aimo de Fulciniaco fundavit anno* 1151, *restauratur anno* 1671." I know vaguely that it was this Aymo de Faucigny who, in the XIIth century, brought Jean d'Espagne, of blessed memory, and his companions, into this valley, at that time a mere desert, abandoned to the wolves and bears. The monastery was built, and the desert blossomed like the rose."

The Carthusians were wont, once a week, to issue from their walls and go walking, in little groups, on the mountain. I think I can still see the procession of white-robed figures on the road that leads to the Alpage de Sommier, under the ponderous mass of the Pointe Percée.

" Fifty years ago," says R. Sansterre, " the highest summit in the chain of the Aravis (Pointe Percée) had acquired the reputation of being unclimbable. Repeated attempts had in vain

PRALONG SUR CLUSES

The one-time Chartreuse du Reposoir

Phot. Boissonnas

been made to scale it. With its boldly cut crest, rising to a height of 9,029 ft. in an ascending series of smooth walls or beds of splintered rock, defended, in their turn, on the side next Cluses, by a scarred and weather-worn limestone plateau or 'lapiaz' and, on the side next Sallanches, by steep chimneys down which thundering avalanches of stones frequently fell, the Pointe Percée had, indeed, all the characteristics of a sort of *Mons inaccessibilis*, of a "Cervin." "Who has not admired," says A. Tonneau, "the audacious profile, the scarped and vertiginous cliffs, the harmoniously beautiful lines of this peak! From every height in Savoy, in the Vaudois Alps, or in the mountains of Dauphiné, it can be seen tossing its haughty head into the air above all its neighbours."

Phot. Boissonnas

At the Grand Bornand

The first ascent of this peak dates from 1861, and was effected by M. Maquelin of Geneva, together with a few companions. "When we arrived at the foot of the Aiguille, the guide refused to go any further, declaring the ascent impossible; and two of our party, convinced of the folly of the enterprise, came to the same decision. As for the others and myself," says M. Maquelin, "we were obstinately bent on proceeding, in fulfilment of an oath, rashly sworn between us."

Whereupon the climbers, abandoning their knapsacks and blankets, and keeping only their ice-axes, commenced the attack. "After turning the rocks, a manœuvre which we found

very difficult, we reached a dangerous ice slope, and, higher up, a crumbling, knife-edged ridge, ending in a little snowy ledge, on which we were about to venture, when, by good luck, thrusting my ice-axe forward, I encountered a void, and so revealed an abyss at our feet. Finally, after two hours' hard work, we crossed the last *col*, and found ourselves unexpectedly at the summit.

"Our feelings can be more easily imagined than expressed. Thus beyond hope successful, there on that giddy peak, under a cloudless sky of deepest blue, our emotions overcame us and we fell into each other's arms. While to each, moved by a fear which all felt but none was willing to confess, there came the thought of that home fireside whither he would fain have returned by the shortest possible path." . . .

As a matter of fact, there is to-day a very well marked path along the sides of the Pointe, and the worn rock witnesses to its frequent use. The descent to Sallanches, by chimneys in which rings are placed to which ropes may be adjusted, is effected without any difficulty.

Pointe Percée, however, had further surprises in store for climbers, and in a number of the *Tour de France* of 1905, Commander Kœnig wrote that "a still unvanquished summit has been discovered in this massif by some climbers from Geneva. This is the Doigt de la Pointe Percée, an enormous rocky spur, in the form of an aiguille, of this extraordinary peak, which is pierced from east to west by an opening visible to the naked eye from the village of Pralong, an opening through which, at certain hours, the sun or moon can be seen shining."

The first ascent was an extremely serious affair, so far as difficulty was concerned. Following the usual route to the Pointe Percée, the young climbers "succeeded, by way of couloirs and tracks, in attaining the ridge leading from the Pointe Percée to the Doigt. This ridge, besides being extremely dizzy, was encumbered with huge blocks of rock, which had to be cleared, step by step, out of the path of advance. Their 40-metre rope was of great assistance to them in several places, and after an hour and a half of vaulting and riding cock-a-horse in mid-air they at last reached the summit of the Doigt, at a height of about 8,600 ft."

I read this fascinating account and went to interview Tricouni, the famous mountaineer whom everybody knows, the moving spirit in this dangerous enterprise, and the conqueror of the Doigt de la Pointe Percée.

A climber of consummate skill and experience, he is also exceptionally modest, with a passion for all that pertains to mountains. In his room, which was hung with Alpine landscapes picturing his beloved peaks, I turned over the leaves of an old and well-thumbed album of yellow photographs, each with its story of some scramble. . . . He entered, and began, with his pleasant smile, to relate the story of the climb. He had made the ascent alone, it seems, his companions having lost nerve at the last moment. He was, therefore, well entitled to the distinction of having been first on the summit of the Doigt. As for the difficulties to be encountered, he made light of them ; there had been some freshly fallen snow, and there was one huge block of rock which he had had to clear out of the way. . . .

In the following month, Tricouni returned to the same spot with the same companions, who had now taken heart of grace ; and in order to prove the possibility of the ascent to a sceptical guide, remaining behind at Pralong, he made his way up the Doigt to the opening itself ; where he announced his triumphant arrival by fixing a flag to the breach in the wall. In his own words : "As you may imagine, I was none too steady in a hole that broadens out at the top and is so narrow at the bottom that my heel hung over one side of the mountain and the tip of my shoe over the other." The flag was seen from below and the guide could not but admit that Tricouni had kept his word.

This Doigt de la Pointe Percée is not the summit of the mountain. On the contrary, it lies at a considerable distance from it, and forms the extremity of an arête of some length which is reached by leaving, at half-way up, the direct path to the peak. Nevertheless this particular summit affords, from all accounts, one of the finest scrambles in the district. The ascent begins by way of steeply inclined slopes, on which snow frequently lies. R. Sansterre has given us a vivid description of it :—" Our way lay along the base of the ridge : above us the dark rocks frowned, outlined against a marvellously limpid sky. The commanding character of our antagonist soon made itself felt, and we had good hopes of a first-rate piece of mountaineering on the grand scale. Arrived at the perpendicular wall, no mean height in itself, along the top of which we had to travel, we had in front of us that splendid festoon of " gendarmes" which succeed each other all the way to the Doigt. Then the ridge dips down and the summit lies underneath, making a descent necessary. A few more ups and downs, and the ridge

POINTE PERCÉE : THE " DOIGT "

Phot. Granier

Phot. Kern

CHALETS AT SOMMIER-DESSUS

Phot. Granier

POINTE PERCÉE (9,029 FT.)

Phot. Granier

POINTE PERCÉE : THE SUMMIT (9,029 FT.)

makes its final plunge to the last depression.

The rock is sound and quite free from débris, so that scaling or outflanking these pinnacles was a pleasure. The higher one climbed, the deeper grew the depths through which one looked down at the Doran coomb, and the desert where the tiny hut nestles. Both slopes were in view most of the time, so inconsiderable is the distance between them and so narrow is the ridge on top.

Variable and changing from day to day, these slopes remain in the

Phot. Granier

POINTE PERCÉE :
The Arête du Doigt

memory as a vision of huge and rigidly perpendicular walls, of smooth slabs of rock vanishing into nothingness, or of the precipitous sides of some stupendous gully. To have sat astride this ridge is to have had a thrilling and unforgettable experience which has been compared to that afforded by some of the Chamonix Aiguilles."

Looking at the tiny black specks sliding and scrambling on the precipitous faces of those gigantic rocks, it may occur to some to ask : What profit, what aim, do these men pursue ? The answer is ready to hand, and it is the motto of every Alpine climber :

" *L'amour de la montagne élève les âmes,*
développe les énergies."

Phot. Boissonnas

CLUSES : THE GORGE

CHAPTER VII

—

FROM CLUSES TO CHAMONIX

CLUSES, built at the northern extremity of the long chain of the Aravis, is a very pretty and ancient little town. The mountains rise steeply both to right and left of it, so that, situated as it is at the very entrance of a gorge hollowed out of the rock by the river Arve, Cluses may be said to hold the strategic key of the valley. Further on, the latter once more opens out into the Sallanches region, which is dominated by Mont Blanc.

As I have already said, a high road mounts from Cluses by way of Scionzier to Pralong and the Chartreuse du Reposoir, but another and more direct route, through Nancy, leads to Romme, a little village on an eminence which commands a view of the whole valley from the Reposoir to the Col des Annes. If the wooded ridge of the

Phot. Boissonnas

BONNEVILLE

mountain is followed from Romme, the head of Mont Salaz (6,627 ft.) is easily reached, and, further on, the chalets of Méry, and the peak of that name. From this point, the panorama is identical with that seen from the Pointe Percée. The valley of the Arve, unrolled at one's feet, as it were in the twinkling of an eye ; gradually opening out into a wonderful plain, which spreads and sweeps forward to those majestic presences on the horizon : on the left, the range of the Aiguille de Varens, towering upwards like the ruins of some gigantic fortress, with its companions in pride, the huge mass of the Pointe du Colloney (8,832 ft.) and the sharp peak of the Aiguille de Platé (8,376 ft.) ; and, on the right, Mont Fleury (9,030 ft.), partly hidden by the swelling rampart of Les Quatre Têtes or Les Fours, whose rocky battlements run down into wooded terraces. The Cascade d'Arpenaz, which can be seen from the road, falls from a height of 880 ft. down the rocky wall of the Flamé, its rainbow-tinted mane waving high in air before its final plunge to earth.

At this point is suddenly unveiled a prospect which for sheer magnificence suggests rather a celestial vision than an earthly landscape—the mighty mass of Mont Blanc, with his crowd of attendant courtiers : the Aiguille Verte, the Aiguille du Tacul, Mont Maudit, the Dôme du Goûter, the Aiguille de Bionnassay,

Phot. Montant

SALLANCHES AND THE CHAIN OF MONT BLANC

The Aiguille du Midi (12,608 ft.); Mont Blanc du Tacul (13,941 ft.); Mont Maudit (14,669 ft.); Mont Blanc (15,782 ft.); the Aiguille de Bionnassay (13,341 ft.); Dôme de Miage (12,100 ft.)

Phot. Morand

COMBLOUX, THE AIGUILLE DU GOUTER (12,609 FT.);
MONT BLANC (15,782 FT.), AND THE AIGULLE DE BIONNASSAY (13,341 FT.)

the Dôme de Miage, and Mont Tondu, standing out in bold outline against the dappled back-ground of the sky. From nowhere else does Mont Blanc display himself so liberally or with a splendour so incomparable.

The valley of the Arve should really be called the valley of Mont Blanc, whose imposing dome of ice not only fills the picture, but is the chief centre of interest in it. The lines of the mountains and the thoughts of men are drawn together and, as it were, focussed in a single point, on the great mountain's gleaming summit, which shines like a precious stone, turning rose, violet, or orange in the sunlight, according to the hour, and becoming a globe of refracted light, or perhaps showing tints of blue, mauve, or green when the shades of twilight creep up the valley. The angelus calls the world to its devotions ; and with the note of that mystic bell, the human soul and the soul of things bow down. Then, while the moon rides in the translucid depths of heaven among thousands and thousands of stars, the icy mountain-mass seems but to loom up larger than ever.

Another little town, Sallanches, is situated at the base of

green-clad slopes, over which are scattered smiling villages, hamlets, and chalets. The Romans were perhaps the first founders of the little town which became in the XVth century the centre of a deanery and of a collegiate church. About 1840 it was completely destroyed by fire. The pioneers of Alpine climbing all passed in their day through Sallanches, and all the early exponents of the sport no doubt stayed there at one time or another. It was at Sallanches that horses were changed in those pre-motoring days, when the ever-increasing crowd of travellers arrived by post-chaise or diligence. It is still a very lively town at the height of the season.

An amusing document relating to Sallanches is the account of the expedition made by two Englishmen who encamped there in the days when the "*glaciaires de Chamouni*" were beginning to be explored. It was on the 19th June, 1741, that Windham and Pococke left Geneva and took the road to Mont Blanc. The party consisted of not less than eight gentlemen, with their servants, to the number of five, all well-armed. "With our string of pack-horses," says the narrator, "we looked like a little caravan. . . . Whilst admiring the beauty of the scenery, we found great amusement in cracking our whips and firing off pistols by the way, in order to listen to the response made by the echoes which abound in this district." Arrived within sight of Sallanches, they pitched their tents, and Pococke, who was just returned from a long voyage, assumed an oriental garb, to the amazement and bewilderment of the natives who crowded round the encampment and probably mistook them for one of those travelling circuses which go about the villages of the countryside.

The Englishmen left the neighbourhood of Sallanches and of the Frasse next day, continued their journey by tracks growing ever worse and more narrow, forded the Arve near Servoz, and arrived at Chamonix, whence they reached the Montenvers.

I like to think of the great H. B. de Saussure in this Sallanches district, meditating his great ascent of Mont Blanc : and there, too, it would have been pleasant to meet his companion, the worshipper of mountains, Marc Théodore Bourrit, precentor in the cathedral of Geneva. The sight of the Alps had transformed the latter into a painter and writer, and it was on the Voirons, in 1761, that he had his revelation. In his own words : "I was profoundly moved, and as it were beside myself, when I beheld for the first time the magnificent chain of the Alps." His dreams thenceforth were all of mountains, descriptions of

mountains, engravings of mountains—and the fame of a mountaineer. I should like to have heard him giving an account of his feelings and exploits on his return from one of his expeditions ; he had a turn for passionate expression. Of an avalanche, for example, he speaks thus : " It is like the noise of thunder rolling and reverberating through the caverns of the soul. Fire flashes from the shock of the colliding ice-blocks, the pines tremble on the neighbouring Alpine slopes and all nature seems shaken to her foundations."

On the heights, not far from Sallanches, stands the pretty village of Mégève (at an altitude of 3,652 ft.), in an open valley, which forms the upper basin of the Arly. This valley is four miles broad by six long. Fertile slopes, crowned with pine forests, make a wonderful frame for the village. These slopes are backed by gigantic rocky walls, rising in terraces, at just a sufficient distance from the village to give it all the charm of an Alpine resort without narrowing its horizons. Here are, on the one hand, Mont Joly, the imposing barrier of 8,291 ft. that stands out-post to Mont Blanc ; and, on the other hand, the Chaîne des Aravis, with its capriciously jagged ridge.

Attractive in summer and captivating in winter, Mégève takes rank as one of the best reputed resorts in the French Alps. Lovers of the toboggan and the bobsleigh, of skating and of the more exciting ski, are to be seen there in crowds, enjoying themselves on the slopes, amid clouds of the crystal dust that blows from the frozen snow. The ski-running grounds are on an extensive scale and lend themselves to the most capricious evolutions.

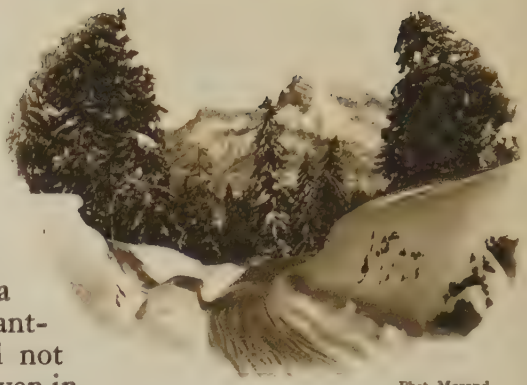
The neighbourhood of Mégève is also well worth a visit during the summer. There are tempting excursions to be made in all directions : to the Grottes aux Fées, the Cirque de Passy, Sallanches, the Pont du Diable, the Gorges de l'Arly, the Col des Aravis, the Lac de la Girotte, the Désert de Saint-Jean, the Cascade de la Belle-au-Bois-Dormant, and the Croix de Christomet, whence a view can be had of the whole range of the Alps.

Excursions may be made on foot or by carriage, in a sledge or on the back of a mule. The scenery to be visited is magnificent, and no one who has ever been on one of these expeditions will easily forget the experience.

Before making our way up the gorges leading to Chamonix, we may visit another holiday centre, Le Fayet and the Baths of St. Gervais, with the Montjoie valley, which forms a right-angle with that of the Arve.

Phot. Morand

General View of Mégève



Phot. Morand

SNOW ON THE AIGUILLES DE VARENS

A world of fashion flourishes in the chalets, villas, and hotels which people this deep valley. In the old days, things were far different. Wild and little frequented, this cleft in the mountains had the look of a place under some evil enchantment. The snow itself did not behave like ordinary snow ; even in the hardest winter it melted almost immediately. This unaccountable circumstance troubled not a little the minds of the inhabitants. Shepherds, peering into a mysterious brooklet, found its waters tepid ; noted, also, the black streak trailed by the stream through the surrounding whiteness ; and asked themselves : Were these things in the order of nature ? Was it not time to speak to Monsieur le Curé ? The latter, meeting the doctor, then on one of his visits, mentioned the matter to him ; with the result that the mystery

Phot. Morand

SILVER FOX BREEDING AT MÉGÈVE

Phot. Morand

THE COL DES ARAVIS

Phot. Morand

FLUMET

was cleared up and the spring, having been traced and put in harness, the baths were organised.

Here, again, we encounter R. Tœpffer and his pupils, a joyous band, staying at St. Gervais, visiting its neighbourhood, and coming back in the evening to their hotel, full of their discovery of stalactites in a grotto. The find was mentioned *au salon* to an ecclesiastic who declared he had never seen such a curiosity, but made no doubt he could explain the origin of the thing. "It is," said he, "ice petrified!" One can imagine the smile—and what a smile it would be—of the ironic Tœpffer.

Tœpffer's mocking pencil has drawn a picture of the well-known establishment of Monsieur and Madame Roux, owners of the summer boarding-house at Prarion, one of the first attempts in modern hotel-keeping. Roux himself "is a fat fellow who, from the balcony of his hut, counts the mouths that climb the mountain, calculates the number of greedy stomachs and the possible depth of purses, and dispatches provisions accordingly to overtake the travellers," thus helping, in due course, to replenish the larder of the restaurant kept by his spouse, Madame Roux.

There is no end to the stories we might be beguiled into telling! Without further dallying, let us stroll up the valley to

ST. GERVAIS

Phot. Morand

Phot. Morand

Le Fayet

the chapel dedicated to Notre-Dame de la Gorge. From the Mégève side, Mont d'Arbois and Mont Joly are within an easy walk, and splendid views may be had from them. As we make our way up this valley, we have in front of us the Pointe des Fours, the bare and barren Col du Bonhomme, Mont de la Roselette, and the Aiguille of that name, and, on the other slope, the pretty lake of La Girotte.

Tœpffer and his pupils passed this way also—meeting on the ascent a poor woman tending her goat: "she could not understand what drew foreigners to a country where there was nothing but bad weather

Phot. Martinet

The Viaduct at Les Houches

Les Houches, Mont Maudit (14,669 ft.) and the Aiguille du Gouter (12,609 ft.)

Phot. Taurtas

and hard work." "We have a wretched life of toil" she said, "and you people who have no cares and plenty to live on, behave as if you liked to fancy yourselves one of us."

From the Plan des Dames, by way of the rocky flank of the mountain, the way lies towards the Col des Fours, a gloomy-featured ridge, without a blade of grass or a clod of earth, swept by winds, scarred by lightning, and overarched by a sky of sombre blue, like that of the midnight heavens; so that we are tempted to think that the sun has turned away his face from this region, and that here are the illimitable domains of death and of silence.

The great glaciers of Trélatête, Miage, and Bionnassay, issuing from Mont Blanc, extend arms like tentacles, coming down here from those spurs of the mountain whose names are Mont Tondu (10,486 ft.), the Aiguille du Glacier (12,579 ft.), that of Trélatête (12,832 ft.), and of Bionnassay, with its gleaming, sharp-cut crest, standing up against the sky, and the Aiguille du Goûter (there are fine crystals to be found in its rocks). Our way from here to Mont Blanc, when we leave St. Gervais, and have reached the Col de Voza and the Tête Rousse glacier, will lead us by way of those tremendous ice-fields and formidable ridges.

Phot. Tairraz

THE DIOSAZ CASCADE

Phot. Boissonnas

THE AIGUILLE DE BIONNASSAY (13,341 FT.)
in the Mont Blanc massif

CHAPTER VIII

—

MONT BLANC

OF all the Alpine summits, Mont Blanc, for more than a century, has exercised a greater fascination for climbers and for tourists in general than any other. One has only to consult the innumerable books specially devoted to this vast subject.

In the old days, the mountaineers of the valley may almost be said to have been unaware of the existence of their mountain ; seeing it, as they did every day, they saw it not. Its spell, so far as they were concerned, was powerless. Its day did not come till a genius like Balmat, with courage to endure and a love of the mountain that would not be denied, attacked and conquered the virgin summit ; now everyone knows the repeated attempts of that intrepid Chamognard, who was accompanied on his third ascent by H. de Saussure, the Genevese scientist. That was in the summer of 1786. But we shall allow Balmat to tell the story for himself (what follows is from a manuscript discovered in 1904) :

Phot. Tairraz

CHAMONIX AND THE BRÉVENT (8,284 FT.)

"I went for the first time to the Dôme du Goûter on the 28th June, 1786, and I went alone. On my way down, towards the foot of the Montagne de la Côte, I met three men also bound on an exploring expedition, who invited me to turn back with them. This I consented to do, went home for provisions, and at 11 o'clock of the evening of the same day once more set out to rejoin them on the summit of the Montagne de la Côte, which I reached at two o'clock next morning. We at once set out and reached the Dôme du Goûter by mid-day. Having been

Phot. Tairraz

THE MONUMENT TO H. B. DE SAUSSURE AT CHAMONIX

Phot. Tairraz

MONTENVERS AND THE AIGUILLE DU DRU (12,320 FT.)

caught in the mist and having seen two men at the top of the Goûter, we called to them and they gave us to understand that they would like to join our party. In the meantime I set out by myself to make the ascent by the Arête Blanche ; I got almost to the summit, but could not reach it, owing to the mist. Redescending in quest of my comrades, I was unable to find them ; they had gone down, leaving me alone. I took heart of grace and once more began the climb, this time by the left side. I managed to get quite close to Mont Blanc, and had a view of the Val d'Aosta. Mont Blanc was completely covered by fog. I was forced to redescend to the Grand Plateau, where night overtook me and where I was brought up by a great crevasse which I had

Phot. Monnier

THE FAMOUS GUIDE
ALFRED COUTET
Killed on the Aiguille du Dru in 1925

Phot. Tairraz

THE GLACIER DES BOSSONS, MONT MAUDIT (14,669 FT.) ; MONT BLANC (15,782 FT.) ; THE DOME DU GOUTER (14,210 FT.) AND THE GLACIER DE TACONNAZ

Phot. Tairraz

THE MER DE GLACE

In the distance: The Col des Hirondelles, Grandes Jorasses, Mont Mallet and Dôme de Rochefort.

Phot. Tairraz

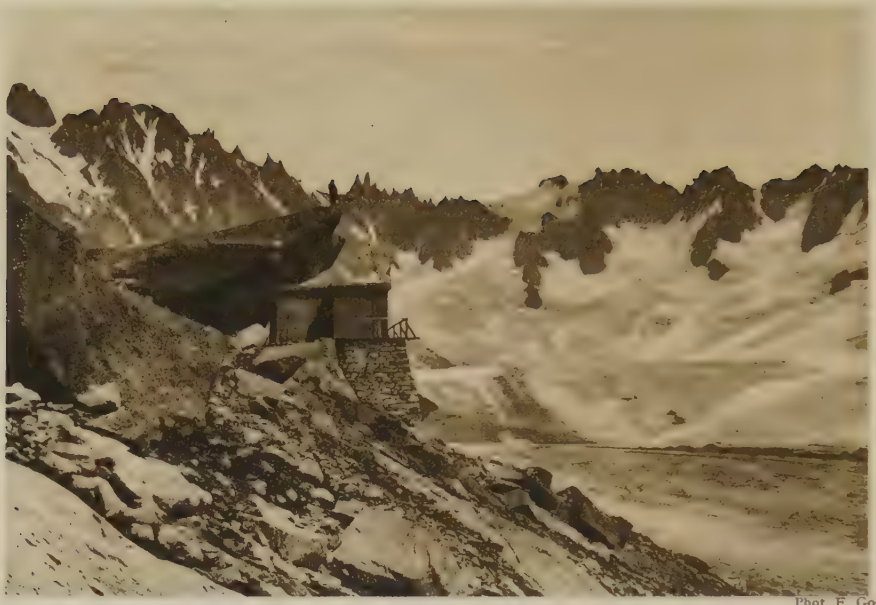
The Glacier du Tour and Aiguille du Chardonnet (12,540 ft.)

crossed in the morning by way of a feeble bridge of frozen snow. This bridge I could not find in the darkness and fear of being crushed by the ice forced me to retrace my steps to the top of a ridge ; there I spent the night, 1455 'toises' above the Priory, my fourth night out-of-doors. My clothes, and the handkerchief about my face, froze on me. I kept stamping and striking my hands together all night, and having seen that the sun was too feeble to drive away the clouds from the summit of Mont Blanc, I redescended to Chamonix. It was only a few days afterwards that Dr Paccard invited me to make the same attempt with him, and setting out on the 7th August, 1786, we did not reach our goal till six o'clock of the evening. We remained 32 minutes on the summit and then redescended to the Montagne de la Côte, which we reached at 11 o'clock of the evening. On the 9th, we arrived at Chamonix at 8 o'clock of the morning."

After this feat, of course, the name of Jacques Balmat was on every tongue and became famous far beyond his native valley. Bourrit obtained for him the patronage of the King of Sardinia, together with the surname of "Mont Blanc Balmat;" a genuine title of nobility. The renown of Mont Blanc

Phot. Boissonnas

CHAMONIX, FROM THE FLÉGÈRE



Phot. E. Gos

THE COUVERCLE HUT

was bound to be enhanced by the success of Balmat, and from that day the tide of tourist pedestrianism set in strongly towards the mountain, creating that modern sport of Alpine climbing which has one of its chief centres at Chamonix.

In 1847 " the excursion from Geneva to Chamonix and back takes in itself not less than five whole days. A guide costs 6 francs a day for ordinary climbs, and 10 francs for the more difficult ones, such as those whose objective is the Buet, the Jardin, the glaciers other than those of the Chamonix valley, and even the latter when the upper line of vegetation is to be passed. And for the ascent of Mont Blanc, a guide's fees are 40 francs.

" Light, uncovered *chaises à porteurs* are to be had both at Chamonix and on the St. Bernard road for the benefit of those persons who are afraid of tiring themselves " (J. L. Manget).

Chamonix and Mont Blanc are the names, inalienably linked together, of a shrine to which the foreigner, tired of towns, the tourist, and the Alpine climber make common pilgrimage.

The little village has changed quickly and thoroughly ; its modern " palaces," " grand hotels," smart tea-rooms, up-to-date restaurants, tennis-courts, and in the season, its winter-sports, have banished even the memory of those far-off days when

Phot. E. Gos

THE AIGUILLE DU GÉANT (13,170 FT.)

Phot. Tairraz

THE DOIGT DE MESURE AND THE AIGUILLE VERTE

travellers arrived in carts and diligences. There is now a first-rate electric railway from Le Fayet to Le Châtelard built by the P.-L.-M. and running on to Martigny in the valley of the Rhône.

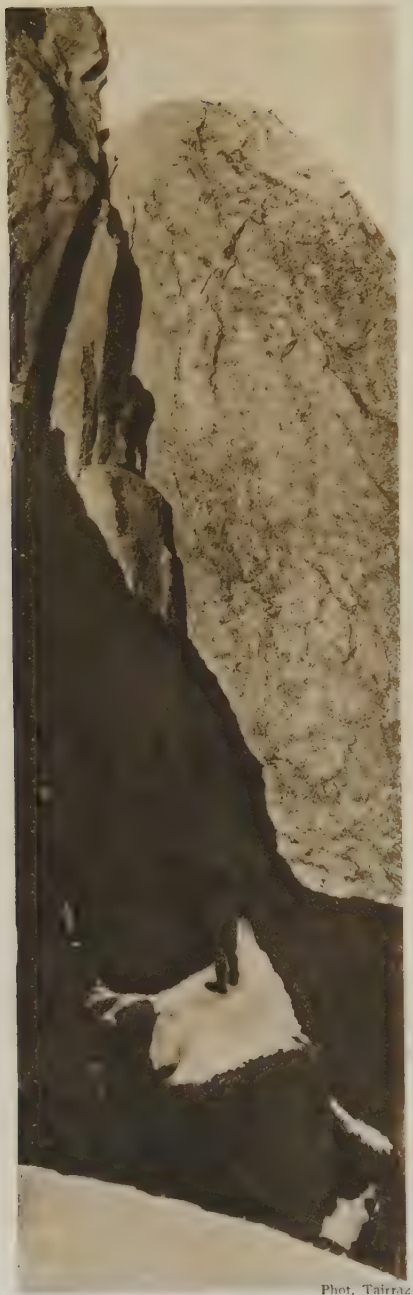
Another line, a cog-wheel railway, runs from Chamonix to the Montenvers, near the Mer de Glace ; soon the Aiguille du Midi will be within reach, and a third line, from St. Gervais to the Bionnassay glacier over the Col de Voza, will attain the summit of Mont Blanc itself.

The highest summit in the Alps (15,782 ft.), Mont Blanc rears its tremendous dome of ice over the marvellous range of aiguilles and glaciers of which it is the culminating and central point.

Those huge glaciers and granite peaks whose serrated battlements line the horizon, are often made the subject of naive humour by the simple tourist. And, for that matter, they are inured to familiarity, having been baptised into human society, and bearing, each of them, a name derived from some person, animal, or quality belonging to the world at

Phot. Kern

ON THE GRÉPON : THE 'GRAND DIABLE'



Phot. Tairraz

On the Grépon : The Mummery Crack

their feet ; witness such appellations as Moine, Capucin, Géant, Dames Anglaises ; or Aiguille du Requin, l'Aigle, Grands Mulets, Cheval Rouge ; or, again, Aiguille Verte, Mont Maudit, Aiguille Noire, Aiguilles Rouges ; and last, but not least, Mont Blanc itself.

Easy as the ascent of Mont Blanc may be by the usual route, a certain amount of staying power is necessary on the glaciers, and the traveller should be more or less accustomed to the air of the High Alps. The track begins in a zig-zag over the flank of the mountain, through forests and pastures, until the Glacier des Bossons and the Grands Mulets rocks are reached ; and here, in the comfortable little inn, it is customary to pass the night. Next day, at dawn, the march begins over the endless glacier ; we cross those crevasses of which everybody has heard, and in due course reach the Grand Plateau, the Dôme du Goûter, and the Vallot hut, clinging to its rock. Now, at last, the summit is near. We follow the Bosses ridge, which presents nothing very dizzy or terrible, and so attain the final slope, on which M. Janssen built his observatory.

From the summit—that belvedere hung between heaven and earth—a view reaching out into infinity on all sides may be obtained, if the weather is

Phot. Tairraz

THE AIGUILLE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE (10,844 FT.) ; THE GRANDS CHARMOZ (11,293 FT.) ; THE COL DES NANTILLONS (10,801 FT.) AND THE AIGUILLE DE BLAITIÈRE (11,549 FT.)

Phot. E. Gos

MONT BLANC, DENT DU REQUIN, AIGUILLE DU PLAN, GRÉPON AND CHARMOZ
seen from the Glacier du Moine

Phot. Tairraz

SUMMIT OF THE GRÉPON (11,447 FT.)
In the distance: The Col du Géant

Phot. E. Gos

THE AIGUILLE DE BLAITIÈRE (11,549 FT.)
seen from Les Petits Charmoz

Phot. E. Gos

The Alligator (11,660 ft.); The Crocodile (11,942 ft.); The Aiguille du Plan (12,051 ft.); The Aiguille des Deux Aigles (11,439 ft.)

fine. But with the coming of a sudden squall, the prospect changes completely. In a few moments the traveller is battling with a whirl of snow and sleet, and if to those assailants fog be added, he must be prepared to face sudden and complete isolation. There have been occasions on which whole expeditions have wandered for hours or days, in helpless bewilderment, to perish at last either exhausted by the bitter cold, swept away by the deadly avalanche, or engulfed in bottomless crevasses.

But the mountain cares not at all; and after some such tragedy, will reveal itself, in the growing light, indifferent, as ever, to mortal anguish. The gloom is dispelled, the clouds part, and the immaculate snow lies sparkling and unspeakably beautiful under a sky of a deeper blue than that of the sea. Happily, catastrophes and accidents are becoming every day rarer on Mont Blanc, a change for the better which is owing to the prudence of guides and to the mountain huts; above all, to the increasing experience of climbers. Given good weather, there is no reason why an expedition to the summit should not be an unmixed pleasure; so much cannot be said, however, of the ascent from the Italian side, where there is an *arête* of a most difficult

character. Mont Blanc has also tempted the aviator : Parmelin flew over it some years ago, and the experienced pilot Durafour accomplished the feat of landing on the snowy plateau of the Dôme du Goûter. . . . What a spectacle for any climbers who had happened to have toiled up towards the summit that day : the aeroplane, a mere speck on the horizon at first, growing larger as it drew nearer, tacking, sailing over them, and finally alighting ; a splendid, a unique sight, not to be had every day of the week !

The view from the summit, magnificent as it is, is also somewhat monotonous : peaks and yet more peaks, as far as eye can reach, and valleys without number huddled together in the bosom of an earth that seems to have shrunk and diminished. . . . The grandest sight that lives in my memory of this expedition is of a blood-red sun slowly drawing about himself the curtains of night, while, from the Vallot hut, I watched the slow departing of the fierce splendour of a summer's day.

* * *

The heights are to be gained not without sweat and toil. The paths are steep and stony, the day is hot, the traveller's heart, perhaps, is not all given to the task in hand ; and all these circumstances must be allowed for in attempting the ascent of a mountain.

For all that, Mont Blanc, promising beauty and fatigue and danger, calls irresistibly to the adventurer ; and we may well agree with Rambert (the Swiss writer, who has specialised in the lore of the mountain) that " while for the inexperienced and light-headed who attempt the heights, the game is apt to be one in which the dice are loaded and chance holds the stakes, to anyone who has experience of climbing and the ability to profit by it, the mountains offer the glory of proving himself the master of chance rather than its slave. As long as no movement is made without due care taken, the narrowest and most dizzy of *arêtes* can be followed without fear of a fall, and in the duel between the frailty of imagination on the one hand and the cold confidence of reason on the other, it needs only a little practice of mountaineering to make reason the certain and habitual victor. . . . Of all games, the game of climbing is perhaps the one in which the player tastes most keenly the joy of being alive."

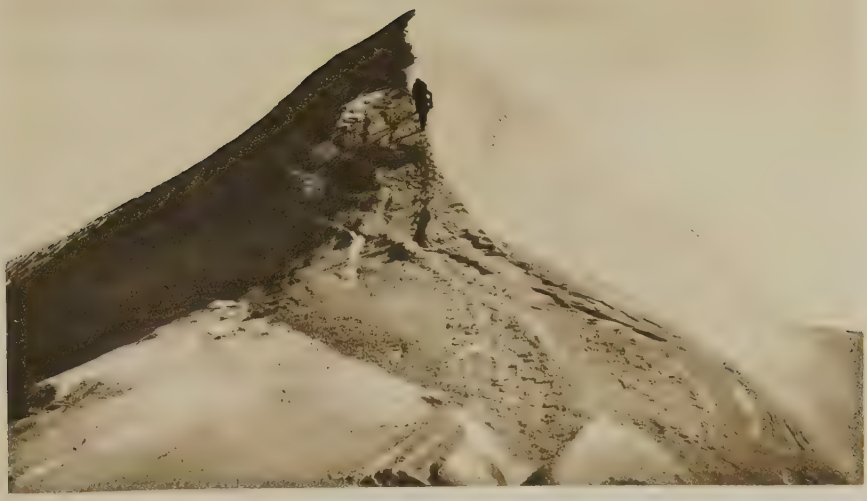
Mont Blanc, for all its beauty and immensity, must not be understood as including the whole *massif*. There, also, are the Grépon, the Grandes Jorasses, the Aiguille de la République, the Aiguille du Dru. Those bold and formidable peaks, whose precipitous walls, rising to heights of more than 12,000 ft., hide secrets unknown even to the eagle—are so many towers assaulted by man with a persevering zeal that never tires of seeking out new ways of scaling them. There the climber, clinging to the rope that stretches across the abyss or pulls him from its jaws, must practise that sort of perilous gymnastic which Guido Rey has happily dubbed '*l'alpinisme acrobatique*.'

I would fain write the poem of that waste of glaciers weltering round those jagged pinnacles of granite and of ice as enduring as granite ; I would sing of the shelters that welcome the weary mountaineer and give him a roof, a fire, and a bed in which to dream his dreams of fabulous heights scaled and conquered. But I remember the silence and dignity of the giant Alps and my lips are sealed. . . .

From the Mer de Glace to the Montenvers, the view is worthy of fairy-land : the precipitous Grand Dru and Petit Dru springing up in one bound to join hands with the Aiguille Verte, while the ridge of the Moine stands out from the background in the company of the Grandes Jorasses. It was over there in the moraine that the two Englishmen, Windham and Pococke, made a halt and cut their names on a block of granite, which stood there for many a day (" la Pierre aux Anglais ").

On the other side of the valley are to be seen the Aiguilles Rouges, which mark the extreme limit of the Alpine foot-hills, and beyond which lie the plains and Lake Geneva.

When the glaciers are left behind at the Montenvers, and grass, trees and flowers once more greet the traveller's eye, the memory naturally goes back to the " Château du Montenvers," which was transformed into the " Temple de la Nature " and which has since been happily restored to honourable usage. Before 1741 this was nothing but a shepherd's hut on the Montenvers, in which the first Alpine explorers were accustomed to sleep. It was called, in mockery, the " Château du Montenvers." But in 1779, an Englishman sojourning at Geneva, Mr Charles Blair, touched by this wretched provision for the needs of travellers, had a wooden *maisonnette* constructed at his own expense for their comfort. This was called the " Hospice de Blair " or " Blair's Hospital."



Phot. Tairraz

SUMMIT OF MONT BLANC (15,782 FT.)

Phot. Granier

THE DÔME DE MIAGE (12,050 FT.) AND THE AIGUILLE DE BIONNASSAY (13,341 FT.)
from the Vallot hut

Phot. Tairraz

THE GRANDS MULETS (10,030 FT.) AND MONT BLANC (15,782 FT.)

Later on, in 1793, the Marquis de Sémonville, his wife, Maret, future Duke of Bassano, and T. M. Bourrit, being overtaken by storm on the Montenvers, took refuge in the Hospice de Blair. The poverty of the arrangements in the shelter suggested to Sémonville (who was, as it happened, ambassador of the French Republic) the idea of building a hut which should be better equipped. He interested Bourrit in this plan and promised him a speedy remittance of funds for the purpose. But Sémonville, for his part, went off to Turkey and forgot his promise. Bourrit thereupon applied to the envoy at Geneva, Felix Desportes, submitting to him, in his turn, the suggestion of Sémonville. Desportes showed himself favourably disposed to his visitor's plan and gave him, out of hand, 2,000 francs. Work was begun in the spring of 1795, and in July of the same year the building was finished. The words " A la Nature " were inscribed on the pediment. Sémonville had proposed the following inscription : " To Nature, from a friend of Liberty." By an extension of meaning, the Montenvers shelter became known as the " Temple de la Nature."

In 1840, when the first Montenvers hotel was built, the

Phot. Morand

CONTAMINES ; THE DOME DE MIAGE (12,050 FT.) AND THE AIGUILLE DE BÉRANGER (11,257 FT.)

'Temple' was annexed to it—as laundry and coach-house.

In 1923, the Temple de la Nature was restored by the efforts of the French Alpine Club and of the Touring Club de France, and, instead of being delivered to its original purpose, was turned into a kind of Alpine monument, sacred to the memory of the men who had presided at its birth. (*Semaine littéraire*, 1923, article by Charles Gos, " A la Nature.")

Coming down from the heights one day I had lain down in the shade of a bush ; for my shoulders ached under my knapsack, the ice-axe was heavy in my hand, and my feet were tired in their huge boots. My eyes wandered over the forest of fir-trees to the dazzling snows and the peaks. Near me, in a field, a peasant bent over his spade. He drew near, limping as he walked, and began to question me eagerly. Had I been up the Verte by the couloir ? Dangerous work : one had small chance with an avalanche when it fell there, and that was not seldom. Had I heard of the accident on the Géant ? Two young porters lost. Poor fellows, it was hard luck at their age. Perhaps the rope broke : it had been known to happen. And my interlocutor thrust forward his lame leg, and youth and daring looked out of his eyes as he spoke. He also (he would have me understand) had been a guide ; but 1914 had come, the army had claimed him like the others, and here he was with a wooden leg. Hard luck, and yet it was something to be alive, when so many had never come back at all !

Talking eases the heart, and he told me of his ascents and his bivouacs on the arêtes, spoke of how he had crossed crevasses and breasted the storm and been bewildered by the mist ; and pointing with a gesture of pride to an old man smoking his pipe at the door of a chalet, he said that that was his father : a great climber, too, in his day—he had scaled Mont Blanc at over seventy years of age and had been one of the first to storm the Aiguilles.

We parted, my disabled friend and I, with many thoughts on my side, and on his the happiness, I hope, of having opened his heart on his favourite subject. What fellows they are, I reflected, those Chamonix guides ! And I turned to look : he had joined his father, and the talk, no doubt, still ran on mountains between the frail old man and his valiant and vapouring son. Perhaps they spoke of famous men and the deeds done by them : of Jacques Balmat and Michel Croz—the conqueror of the Matterhorn, who perished on the first ascent—or perhaps they told

Phot. Morand

LES BOSSONS, THE GLACIER DES BOSSONS, AND THE AIGUILLE DU MIDI (12,605 FT.)

stories of expeditions made in days past with Joseph Simond, Prosper Payot, F. Folliguet, and Charlet-Straton : all names famous in the history of climbing in this region.

Further on, above the door of some official, I see the three symbolical words of the republican motto, and I reflect that no other motto is better suited to this mountain country, which is for its lovers in very truth a school of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

When a man has left far beneath him the squalor and meanness of towns, and has attained, by a noble prodigality of his whole being, to a vision of Nature in these abodes of her greatest majesty, among the great white silences and eternal snows of the High Alps, he will surely be aware with every step upwards that his mood is growing more spiritual and that his thoughts and feelings are becoming more attuned to the sublimity around him.

Phot. Tairraz

Rope Railway above Chamonix.

Phot. Tairraz

THE SUMMIT OF THE BUET (10,201 ft.)

CHAPTER IX

—

FROM SIXT TO THE VALLEY OF THE ARVE

BETWEEN the Diosaz gorges and the valley of Chamonix stretches, parallel to that of Mont Blanc, a long rocky chain, affording magnificent views from all its summits, as well as from the pastures on its slopes. The principal heights in this range are: the Aiguillette (7,602 ft.), above the hamlet of Les Houches, the Brévent (8,284 ft.), Plan Praz and the Flégère, and lastly, the barren and disrupted Aiguilles Rouges, rising above the Col des Montets, and closing the valley. Further back, we can descry the snowy shoulders of the Buet (10,201 ft.), the great and magnificent mountain which dominates the valley of the Giffre. Seeing it thus from a distance, it is difficult to distinguish it from the glaciers of the Mont Blanc range. But let travellers take note: they will find no more delightful way of going from Sixt to Chamonix or *vice-versa*, than by following the route over this mountain. Starting from

Phot. Tairraz

ARGENTIÈRE, THE GLACIER D'ARGENTIÈRE, THE AIGUILLE D'ARGENTIÈRE (12,819 FT.) THE AIGUILLE VERTE (13,541 FT.), AND THE AIGUILLE DU DRU (12,320 FT.)

Chamonix, the path follows the course of the Arve, whose grey and muddy stream, flowing through woods and meadows, becomes a bustling torrent where it issues from the Argentière glacier, which, flanked by its two moraines of Lognan and Le Planet, pushes quite a long way down the valley.

There is a promise of welcome and of rest in the appearance of the almost self-consciously attractive little church of Argentière, nestling so close to the snows and the glaciers, in the midst of bright green meadows and more darkly green forests. The road runs past the village in a zig-zag towards the Col des Montets, intersecting the fields of Montroc, with their scattered chalets. In spite of the stream of motors hurrying over the pass, the landscape keeps its Alpine grandeur.

Here a brook runs sparkling and murmuring through a smooth, green pasture, and forms a miniature lake in which are reflected the rocky heights of the Aiguille Verte and of the Dru, towering up against the sky. On the Swiss side, a softer landscape of peaks and valleys without number stretches away towards the forests from the scree at our feet, where the goats are playing. Down below is Vallorcine, with, on its left, the lateral valley leading to the Buet. The mountain is reached by way of the great coomb where the

Pierre-à-Bérard stands. Here it was usual to bivouac in the old days, the overhanging rock making a rough shelter under which it was possible to sleep. A rude hut was subsequently built, and to-day a modest hotel ensures the comfort of travellers.

There is a good path to the summit, which is a large and more or less flat surface, covered with heaps of broken and weather-worn stones, partially buried under snow. Here, too, de Saussure has stood, coming, like us, by way of the Pierre-à-Bérard ; and Bourrit, glorying in his conquest of the mountain. Near the pathway may still be seen the huge block of rock called the "Table du Chantre," in memory of the former precentor of the cathedral church of St. Peter at Geneva. He would linger here for hours in rapt contemplation of Mont Blanc.

The *Château Pictet* recalls the name of the learned Genevese physicist who took shelter here when unable to continue his researches owing to stormy weather. And it was two Genevese, the brothers De Luc, who achieved the conquest of the Buet, on the 26th September, 1765.

From the Buet, setting aside the way by the Pierre-à-Bérard, the tourist has the choice of descending in three directions: (1) by the Ecuelle chalets and the Diosaz valley ; (2) by the Col de Leschaud and the Fonds chalets ; (3) by the ridge of the Grenairon.

The view is superb, one of the grandest in the Alps, on account of its extent and of the innumerable peaks to be descried as far as eye can reach, peaks belonging to the Valais and Oberland Alps, the Dents du Midi, the Pic de Tanneverge. And then there is the whole enormous chain of Mont Blanc ; in that puissant and compelling presence the traveller is held captive, feasts his eyes for hours, and lives over again his climbing adventures of by-gone days. And, moreover, the Buet is not a difficult climb, but it is as well to give a wide berth to the snowy cornice on the north-west, overhanging the Val d'Entraigues : a slip there and we should be at the bottom of the mountain in rather too much of a hurry !

Between the Buet and the Dents du Midi our eyes are attracted to several peaks more or less close at hand, mountains overlapping the Franco-Swiss frontier : the Cheval Blanc (9,321 ft.), the Pointe de Finive (9,318 ft.), the Pointe de Tanneverge (9,784 ft.), and Mont Ruan (10,099 ft.) These summits, overlooking from the Swiss side the Barberine glen, are to-day reflected in the lake there, while their slopes on the

French side form the high wall of the Fer-à-Cheval, celebrated for its series of waterfalls.

There are precipices to be found, dizzy enough to satisfy the most daring of climbers, in the Perrons, which lie further back between Emosson and Vallorcine. It was in these mountains that M. E. R. Blanchet, well-known among Alpine climbers for his first ascents, enjoyed his triumphs of *alpinisme acrobatique*, in the company of the guide, Henri Imseng, of Saas-Fée. Starting, as they did, from the Grand-Perron cleft—Pointe Vouillot—they must have had an exciting scramble. "The geological formation of the mountain," says M. Blanchet, " was a continual help to us. The gneiss is very rough, and furrowed with long chimneys, affording numerous points of support which can be relied upon, and rarely crumble. All these chimneys are tilted slightly to the right; so that in order to keep a direct line of ascent to the summit, it is necessary to work towards the left, in a somewhat horizontal position, between the end and the beginning of each of these fissures ; thus a salient is reached, which, while itself offering but few holds for hand or foot, coincides at last with a chimney about 160 ft. high, a veritable ladder, raised perpendicularly above one's head. . . . From here it is impossible, on looking back, to get even a glimpse of the way one has come."

He adds, by way of conclusion: " This climb, given good conditions, can be safely recommended. It is only necessary to have a good head and a sure foot, backed up by a little muscle."

The same mountaineers also climbed the north-east ridge of the Perron (or the Aiguille du Vent), which presents very grave difficulties. In connection with his expeditions to the Perrons, M. Blanchet gives me the following interesting information:

" I am sure that the Grand Perron is of easy access on the French side by a couloir reaching the ridge at a very great distance from the summit.

" The cleft between the Grand Perron and the Pointe Vouillot is also tolerably accessible. Near the cleft, some prudence is needed on the rock, which is sloping and rather slippery.

" There is not much effort required in lowering oneself over a projecting ledge or so. The late Edouard Eternod and I, being overtaken by a storm, came down by this cleft, and we had reached it by way of the Grand Perron. The Pointe Vouillot is probably inaccessible from the French side.

MONT BLANC (15,782 FT.), SEEN FROM THE BUET

Phot Tairraz

"This climb makes a splendid and unusual expedition, well worth the effort.

"The rocks on the mountain appeal to the imagination: the ridge has a powerfully developed muscular system. The descent, when the ropes are adjusted on the face of the cliff, is one of the finest experiences I can remember, though not one of the most difficult, in spite of the cliff's almost terrifying appearance."

Let would-be climbers take heed!

We have had a glimpse of a charming corner of High Savoy on our travels from the Col des Montets to Vallorcine, and have gone on to ascend the Buet, by way of the Pierre-à-Bérard. From Vallorcine, again, we have explored the Perrons, and now we shall set our faces towards the mountains which are grouped between Sixt, the Buet, and the Arve; among them are well-known localities like the Col d'Anterne, the Lac de Gers and the Désert de Platé. Later on, starting from Samoëns, we shall visit the peaks to the north of the Perrons, which stretch from the Pointe de Tanneverge to the *massif* of the Dents du Midi, and are linked up with the Lake of Geneva.

We shall make a fresh start in our mountaineering from Cluses. We have already seen, from the Pointe Percée at Sallanches, or from St. Gervais, the great walls of the Aiguille de Varens rising above the wooded slopes that enclose the valley of the Arve on the right and form the defile of which we spoke in a previous chapter.

H. B. de Saussure was also a visitor to Cluses, and in his "*Voyages pittoresques dans les Alpes*" he speaks of the grotto in the hamlet of Balme, recounting how the inhabitants of Cluses believed a treasure was hidden there and resolved to look for it.

"The grotto was explored by a band of twelve citizens, who albeit they had stout hearts and plenty of curiosity, took the precaution of providing themselves with a number of sacred relics in order to frighten away the evil spirits who might be supposed to be loath to lose the treasure." But, as for the treasure, it had disappeared!

FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY

The Lac de Flaine

The Désert de Platé and the Pointe du Colloney (8,832 ft.)

After Cluses, we reach the pretty village of Magland, and then Bellegarde, where an ancient castle, now used as a farm, still displays its frowning turrets. A tiny path crosses the courtyard of this castle, winds through a grove of beeches, along the bank of a tumbling brook, and ends in a narrow gorge: the only spot from which the ascent of the mountain can be attempted, a place so hidden that at first sight it seems incredible that there can be any path this way at all.

After two hours' hard climbing, the hamlet of la Colonnaz is reached; here are a few houses, fine meadows, and the forest all around. There is also an inn kept by a native of Salvan, who boasts a few provisions, and a barn for the accommodation of tourists whom he welcomes gladly to his kitchen, with its great fire. And travellers like his company and his talk, which is all of hunting and of poaching. On the wall hangs an ice-axe, polished by use, the pretext for many stories told us by our amiable landlord, stories which draw an astonished stare from his boy, a little mite of a fellow, who has previously informed us, with the good faith belonging to his age, that his father makes a point of coming up here every Saturday to "catch the Genevese." Opposite the inn, a little chapel stands forlorn

Phot. Kern

The Pointe de Salles (8,183 ft.)

among the nettles. To this chapel, in other days, *Monsieur le Curé*, from Magland, would come and preach once a month, making that arduous ascent in order that they should not miss hearing mass at La Colonnaz. " But the sermon " says A. Tonneau, " never lasted very long : for the *curé* had hardly blessed his flock before he had stripped off his *soutane* and put on a peasant's blue blouse : when, throwing the belt of his game-bag over his shoulder, he would unearth a first-rate carbine from among the church accessories, and go off to shoot ptarmigan, and even chamois—expeditions from which he would seldom return empty-handed, and whose fruits he enjoyed in his tranquil parsonage at Magland."

From La Colonnaz we make towards the large village of Araches, from whence a high road re-descends to Châtillon and Marignier, and, incidentally, to the Lac de Flaine, lying in a gap of the mountains, and to the Alpine pasture of that name.

The smoke goes up from the chalets into the morning sky, and the landscape in its delicate veil of bluish, sun-flecked mist, might be a picture in some book of fairy-tales. It would only be in keeping should a winged dragon come forth from one of the numerous caves in the overhanging rocks ; and the rotting

Phot. E. Gos

RELIGIOUS PROCESSION AT ARACHES

trunks of trees, half submerged in the water, might be fantastic animals slumbering in the shade till the sun shall awaken them. Here we are in the verdant heart of mountains which gradually become a mere barren wilderness, with the Désert de Platé in the midst of it. " This is a tract of waste land which from a distance looks like a petrified glacier. Of limestone formation, abounding in fossils, a rich field for the student of geology, this immense plateau, with its deep fissures, its broken, scarred, and tormented countenance, is spread over a space of about 18 square miles. The rocky surface, gashed and streaked in every direction, shows an extraordinary profusion of over-lapping furrows, sharp-edged ridges, deep cuttings, picturesque ledges, and wells or pits, in which a scanty handful or two of vegetable earth has provided a nursery for a few wind-borne seeds which have lived to bring a little colour and cheerfulness into the surrounding desolation. This vast rocky space has more resemblance to a landscape in the moon, than to any locality known to man." (A. Tonneau).

The Platé waste presents a very characteristic type of the *lapiaz*, which must not be confounded with the *liappey*. " In spite of the resemblance of the terms, the *liappey* and the *lapiaz* are quite different, the first indicating a rocky débris, displaced and disrupted boulders of limestone, schist, granite, etc. ; while by the second is understood a surface of limestone rocks in which a great number of ' crevasses ' of all sizes have formed under the action of water, leaving between them ridges

Phot. C. Matthey

THE LAC DE GERS

whose edges are here and there so knife-like that it is a matter of great difficulty to cross them, and dangerous to slip on them, (whence their name of *rasoirs* in Savoy)." (F. Vagnon).

The Alps of Platé form a girdle of summits more or less shattered : the Pointe Pelouse (8,120 ft.), the Grands Vents (7,228 ft.), the Croix de Fer (7,691 ft.), the Pointe du Colloney (8,832 ft.), the Aiguille de Varens (8,163 ft.), the Pointe de Platé, the Pointe d'Ayer, the Tête à l'Ane (9,164 ft.), and the Pointe de Salles (8,183 ft.) Here again I must quote Tonneau, whose imaginative way of seeing things clothes these barren peaks with poetic feeling.

" Every summit of this group of mountains has its individual physionomy, although they are all linked together in one continuous ridge, almost without a break. To the north, the Pic de Salles leans over the Rouget waterfall and Salvagny in the protective attitude of a sentinel on guard at the city-gate. The Tête à l'Ane (9,164 ft.), the highest peak in the district, rears its dizzy and precipitous walls above Anterne. The Signal d'Anterne (6,811 ft.), looks as if it might have been formed in some volcanic upheaval of the *lapiaz*, with its companions, the Signal des Fiz and the Pointe du Dérochoir. There follow the Aiguilles de Varens—a magnificent cathedral—the proud pyramid of the Pointe du Colloney, and the Croix de Fer, shaped like some fantastic ship, whose deck is the Haut-de-Véron ; and finally, the series of mountains affording pasturage for cattle, such as the Grands Vents and the Têtes des Prés.

"These mountains were at one time reflected in the waters of four lakes : Flaine, which used to be much larger than it is to-day ; Vernant, the pearl of the Alpine pastures ; Gers, in its purple patch of rhododendrons and of forget-me-nots, less blue than itself ; and lastly, Chedde, of tragic memory, which was choked up and destroyed by a terrible landslip."

Among all these mountains, the most attractive and the least tiring to climb is certainly the Pointe Pelouse, which gets its name from the great meadows that run far up to where the *lapiaz* begins, and make, as it were, a girdle around it. As we are passing the Flaine d'Enhaut chalet, the cattle come out of their shed, eighty cows in all, with some goats and heifers, bawling, frisking, horning each other. Urged forward by the shouts of the shepherds and the barking of the dog, the browsing beasts slowly follow the tiny path leading to the Pelouse pasturage. Higher up there is inviolate solitude, the silent

commerce of the summit with the mists and clouds. Below we can just discern the country round Sixt, the Gers lake ; opposite us the Buet is unveiled for a moment, with the ridge of the Grenairon, and, nearer at hand, the Chaîne des Fiz, grey and bleak, to which Constantin P. Topali, who met his death so young and so tragically on Monte Rosa, made an interesting expedition. I take the opportunity here of paying a tribute to the memory of this great Alpine climber, whose name is still held in honour among his numerous friends of the Swiss and French Alpine Clubs.

Of his expeditions, he wrote as follows : " Those who have been to Sixt have no doubt noticed the steep rocks forming the Pointe de Salles, whose northern ridge springs up bold and straight from the Fonds torrent to the summit, that is to say, to a height of 8,183 ft. This height forms part of a long limestone range, the Fiz, whose eastern slope, overhanging the Anterne lake, is a sheer and dreadful precipice. The attention of Alpine climbers and scientists has for a long time been given to this range, a portion of which collapsed in 1751, falling in the direction of Servoz, and leaving a great gap which is to-day the Col du Dérochoir. This landslip was accompanied by a cloud of dust which took several days to dissolve."

Topali, tempted by these steep rocks which he has thus described, started out to find a new way of ascending them, in the company of three comrades. " A black night, no moon, only stars in the heavens, and the dull thunder of torrents all around us. We struck the well-known track to the Col d'Anterne, and by morning reached the Anterne chalets, all radiant in sunshine and green meadows. A splendid blue dome arched over our heads, and we looked forward to a most interesting ascent."

The hopeful band attacked the cliff by a steep couloir tunnelling its face, and after many difficulties overcome, finally reached the foot of the rocky ridge. " Here " writes Topali, " the rocks were good, and we made an encouraging start. Lightheartedly we hoisted ourselves up, tasting deeply of that joy the mountaineer knows who is in complete ignorance of where his next step will be, and the next after that. It is on occasions such as these that we realise how good it is to be able to dispense with a guide, when, flattened against a rock, and conscious of the yawning depths beneath us, we cautiously feel our way, seeking a sure hold for hands and feet, and defying the precipice.

What happiness was ours in those moments, clinging to the rock-face like lizards, and drinking in the light and the joy of the mountain."

Those who have known Constantin Topali, will recognise in these words the very man, his youthfulness, his enthusiasm, his strength, and that playfulness of his in the face of danger the consequence, in his case, of a constant prudence. I can still see him on the rocks of the Fiz, in his grey felt hat, his crimson *foulard* and blue sweater, feeling his way, with slow and supple movements, from crack to cranny along the rocky ridge ; " picking up a track, clambering in a fissure, sweeping the chimney. From time to time we would come up against an awkward, perhaps an extremely awkward, corner. And always from the depths below mounted the boom of the Salles and Fonds torrents. Nevertheless we went forward, confident in our happy stars, setting our wits against the snares and pitfalls in our path. And we won. We drew near to the great cleft, from which the mountain makes its magnificent spring of 656 ft. straight to the summit."

Topali was a lover of the mountains from his early youth, and gave up all the leisure of his student days to his passion. For this student and lover of mountains, who had a thorough knowledge of all the peaks of High Savoy, and had climbed the most difficult summits in the Alps, death lay in wait one misty day among the séracs of the Gorner glacier. I had a great liking for his sturdy and attractive personality. A born Alpinist, he found in Geneva abundant facilities for exploring those mountains of High Savoy, on which he served his apprenticeship to the craft.

Phot. Kern

SAMOËNS : THE CHURCH

CHAPTER X

THE VALLEY OF THE GIFFRE

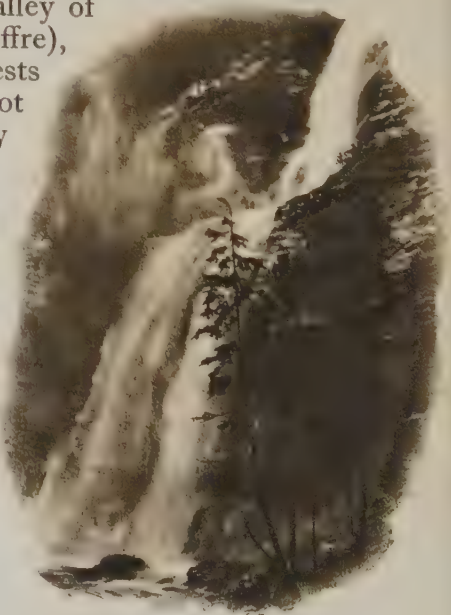
(Samoëns - Lac de Gers - Sixt - Fer-à-Cheval - Col d'Anterne)

LEAVING Cluses behind us, we have reached Samoëns, taking the mountains of Platé on our way. Here the region is watered by two torrents whose source is in the *massif* of the Buet, the Giffre Bas and the Giffre Haut ; they unite in a single stream, the Giffre, which flows on towards the Arve, into which it empties itself not far from Marignier, forming one of the most picturesque valleys in Upper Savoy. We shall be there as soon as we have left St. Jeoire, with the Môle vanishing behind us and other mountains emerging above Mieussy or Taninges : Chalune, the Roc d'Enfer, the Haut-Fleury, the Pointe de Marcelly, and in the same district, the grassy upland at the base of the Col des Gets, with

Phot. Kern

SIXT AND THE VALLEY OF SIXT
In the background: The Pointe de Salles (8,183 ft.)

the village of that name—hamlet, rather than village—with an old church. . . The road, a fine, broad road, here traverses the mountains (thus uniting the valley of St. Jean d'Aulph to that of the Giffre), leads down through gorges and forests to Taninges, and rejoins the plain not far from the old XIIIth century Carthusian nunnery of Mélan, a striking example of austere architecture in rural solitude.



Here the valley spreads out deep and wide, and it is easy to imagine how, after the glacial epoch, the lake in that place must have reflected the naked mountains just beginning to put on their mantles of green foliage. For centuries these forests have covered

Phot. J. H. Jeheber

THE PIC DE TANNEVERGE IN WINTER

the country, the haunts of wild beasts, and it was at Samoëns (the little town in the neighbourhood) that the Lords of Faucigny came to hold their great bear-hunts. The forests have fallen to the axe and the castle of Tornalet has been destroyed ; a chapel now stands in its place on the hill of Chantemerle.

In the morning, as day is dawning and we leave the little town, where everybody is still a-bed, the birds are frolicking on the big lime-tree in the square. *En route*, now, for the Lac de Gers !

A road winding by easy stages through the meadows, past farm-houses where the day's work is already beginning. A man seated on the ground, legs wide apart, hammers his scythe; a dog barks. . . . Samoëns is framed in green foliage and on the other side of the valley run the wide-spreading slopes and ridges of Les Avaudruz, of the Rochers du Criou, and of the Pointe de Rouet ; while the road to the Col de la Golèse, the hamlet of Les Allamands, and the pastures of the Col de Coux may also be seen. Glimpses, too, can be had of Sixt and of the Buet, towering in majestic splendour over the fir-trees at its base. We have been rising as we progress, and as we bear round the shoulder of the mountain we are faced by the Pointe de Salles, with its great sculptured rocks : an impressive vision. An avalanche has fallen here, trees have been torn up, some lying prone, roots in the air, others broken off in half, and the mountain has a look of savagery and sadness under a sky of congregated mists. A great meadow succeeds the forest, and in a gust of melancholy I think of Tœpffer tramping this same road in solitude, nearly eighty years ago. . . . but the sight of the chalets turns my thoughts. We are at Gers, a dozen cow-sheds and dwelling-houses clustered at the extremity of the lake, whose mood to-day is limpid, grey, and still. Its waters bathe the pastures and the extremity of the forest, its banks are gay with rhododendrons, and a herd of cattle passes slowly, with tinkling bells. . . . The mists come down, a small fine rain begins to fall, and I enter the unpretentious inn kept by the Delesmillière family, where a number of shepherds who have taken refuge from the weather sing songs turn-about or perhaps join in a chorus. The songs, of course, are all of *l'amour vainqueur*, of love all-conquering or perhaps cheated; of a soldier bold, the son of a king, or of a shepherd lad; merry songs, sad songs.

I sit down and listen :

Bonjour, père z'et mère
Voulez-vous me donner
Votre fille en mariage ?
Mon cœur en est charmé.

Oh ! pour ma fille elle est trop jeune
Elle est trop jeune, à dix-huit ans,
Faites l'amour en attendant.

Oh ! pour l'amour, j'veux plus la faire,
Garçon qui fait l'amour longtemps,
S'expose bien à perdre son temps.

Je m'en irai sur ces montagnes
Pleurer mes jours, mon temps passé,
En regrettant ma chère bien aimée.

Je ferai faire une chapelle
Tous les amants y passeront
Y prieront Dieu pour un pauvre garçon.

The return, through the mist that lends fantastic shapes to everything, is monotonous, and all the way to Geneva our road in the night is haunted by shadows that come and go in the glare of our head-lights.

On reaching home, I take down the *Nouvelles genevoises* and look up the romantic episode in Tœpffer's narrative :

" The Lac de Gers " he says, " is a sheet of water lying between steep banks whose grassy slopes are darkly reflected in it, while it is itself so transparent that the brilliant mosses covering its bottom can be distinctly seen." As he stands staring into the lake at " the picture of the neighbouring summits, forests, and all the fair face of nature, turned upside down," Tœpffer sees something move on the mountain side, the whole of which was so plainly reflected in the water. He goes on his way and when near the spot that had attracted his attention, he makes " a tour of inspection of some of the rocks and redoubles his precautions." Assailed by black misgivings, he ends by hiding himself among the rocks with the intention of getting to the bottom of this unusual matter. . . .

Suddenly, down there, an ill-looking fellow comes softly out from among the trees, looks round as if to make sure, decides that all is well, and strikes his hands together. " At that signal two other men make their appearance, and all three, shouldering each of them a large sack, begin calmly to ascend, with their pipes in their mouths." By ill luck, they pause for a rest near Tœpffer's hiding-place, and he sees that they are armed with a carbine and two pistols.

" At the sight of them, I commend my soul to God, and squeeze myself against the rock, whose shelter gives me just enough courage not to cry aloud with fright." Suddenly, however, they discover our hero. He is taken for a custom-house officer, pistols are levelled at him. " Gentlemen, I. . . you. . . . excuse me, gentlemen. . . ." He then tries bluff : " Look here, I am one of the right sort. I snap my fingers at custom-houses. I am myself a friend of your laborious calling. Why, we victims of the oppressor have to thank brave

fellows like you for bringing us our little comforts. I have the honour to wish you a very good day. I am just going to have a look at that fine view." All in vain: one of the men lifts his pistol. . . . "Say your prayers." Poor Tœpffer falls flat, a lucky movement on his part, for the smugglers without more ado fasten one of their bundles on his back and drive him forward, with a promise that the next tree they come to will finish his business. The upshot is that instead of killing him, they bind him to the trunk of a larch, and make off.

Tied there to his tree, Tœpffer passes hours of agony, during which he suffers every extremity of emotion: terror, joy, hope, dismay. "It was a wild place, the snow-line close at hand, and travellers not likely to be passing." Presently, however, to him thus bound and helpless, there comes very cautiously a fellow of the countryside, with a face in which astonishment, cunning and fear struggle together. A step or two in advance, an expectant pause, and then, by way of starting conversation: "'Beautiful weather, to-day,'" says he, "as if I were in that predicament for the fun of the thing." Another cautious advance of three paces, another pause, and coming two steps nearer: "'I wonder'" says he, "'what wicked people have fixed you up like that?'" But, hearing how it was, he takes to his heels in a fright, without delivering the admirer of nature from his bonds. In the interval, the playful squirrels frisk among the leaves of the larch, running over the prisoner's bound limbs. "Suddenly, as if by one accord, they all sit motionless, whence I conclude that from up there in the branches they can see someone approaching." And, in fact, he was soon comforted by the appearance of "a huge fat man, followed by the native aforesaid." This was the local magistrate; who hears the story, but regrets he cannot help the prisoner, as an official report must first be drawn up and the case properly attested. "I must have two witnesses able to sign their names, which will take time, as you may imagine, and then there is their day's work to be paid for." He sends the native to fetch the sacristan of the village, and also a certain notary of Maglan. Tœpffer, in a rage, implores, threatens, offers 20 francs to each man; all in vain, he is left alone as before. Towards evening, however, some men and women appear, the magistrate among them, with a pint of wine, and the *curé*, attracted by the adventure. This *curé* was a frail old man, not accustomed to such a climb. "'Sir,'" said he, when he saw me, "'these dirty scoundrels have

trussed you up finely.'" And he made me a bow. The open-hearted and candid bearing of this good old man filled me with joy. 'Dirty scoundrels, indeed,' I replied, 'you must blame them, your reverence, if I am unable either to return your bow or lift my hat to you.'" Thanks to the *curé*, the prisoner was unbound ; when the whole village, "women, brats, shepherds, magistrate, churchwarden, make a circle round us." Then in a joyous band they descend the mountain, Tœpffer leading the way astride of the *curé's* horse, and the evening finishes at the parsonage over a bottle of old wine.

Next day Tœpffer, having no desire left for country walks, makes haste to turn his back on the mountains and to regain his own fireside by the shortest possible route.

Needless to add that such an adventure is quite impossible to-day, and that, on the contrary, the traveller in these parts will find none but honest mountaineers, always ready to show the way or to offer the hospitality of their chalets.

We pass through Samoëns on our way to Sixt. Here there is a splendid abbey, founded by Ponce de Faucigny, in 1444. The monastery, for all that it has been transformed into a hostelry, has kept a charm of its own, and we are glad to stay there a little before proceeding to the wonderful *cirque* of the Fer-à-Cheval, or, it may be, the Col d'Anterne, for here the road branches off into two opposite valleys. One of the roads will take us towards Champéry and by the other we shall once more rejoin the valley of the Arve.

* * *

And now, from Sixt, let us follow up the course of the Giffre Bas, taking several hamlets on our way, those, namely, of Crot, Matenon, the Charnys, Nambride-Dessous and Nambride-Dessus. The valley is narrow, and several times in the course of centuries land-slides have engulfed chalets and even whole hamlets such as that of Entre-deux-Nants, which was buried under the rocks of the Tête-Noire in the year 1602 ; an oratory alone remaining to point to the place where it stood.

Here, the valley widens ; we are at Plan-des-Lacs and shortly afterwards at Plan-du-Clos, while immediately round about us the Fer-à-Cheval displays its lofty parapet of rock, from which the torrents pour in numerous cascades. They fall from the face of the cliff at a height of from 1,650 to 2,300 ft. and their murmur fills the valley, hovering over the meadows

and forests, low or loud, according to the wind, but never ceasing. That tireless energy, that mighty roar coming from the everlasting *névés*, never fails to awaken wonder ; we seem to be listening to the very voice of the mountains . . . From Finive to the Pic de Tanneverge and to Ruan not less than thirty-three cascades can be counted at the time of the melting of the snows ; they succeed each other in the following order, from the Tête-Noire to the Tanneverge : the Massue, the Gurets, the Citerne des Paires, the Contrainte, the Chauma, the Ebray, the Saut Noir, the Nant des Lanches, the Nant du Folly, Fenestrailles or St. Jacques, the Citerne, the Grand Nant, Patte d'Aigle or La Lyre, Pissevache, the Lanches de Tanneverge, the Perrette, the Méridienne (the highest and most important ; at mid-day the sun lights up the hole from which it issues), finally, Pas-Né ; in the Fond-de-la-Combe, which is the wild portion of the Fer-à-Cheval contained between the Tanneverge and Mont Ruan, fifteen other cascades : the Sambry, the Seau d'Elisabeth, the Rejon, the Cage, the Source du Giffre, the Lanchettes, the Rian-Bahon, the Nant du Poi, the Corbassière, the Gouille de la Combe, the Nant du Legnon, the Nant des Lapiaz, the Crêt du Pontet, the Citerne du Penot, Féméré. Whimsical names, singular appellations ! In the scented June twilight, listening to the confused sound of the waters, the mind reverts involuntarily to legend : it would gladden the eyes to see some of Nature's mysterious children, little gnomes and slender elves, coming out of the forest to dance on the flowers and tell stories in a circle, the stories of all those cascades, whose voices have laughter in them to-day and perhaps tears tomorrow.

Leaving aside the passes of Léchaud, Salenton, and Genévrier, which lead towards Vallorcine, it is possible to reach Switzerland from the Fer-à-Cheval by two other passes ; and most travellers prefer the Sageroux or the Col de Tanneverge. The latter is reached by a very steep little path, inaccessible to cattle, with the result that the pasturage, perched high up on the mountain, is turned to account by the shepherds of the Valais, who come here with their herds from the neighbouring Swiss territory. From the pass it is possible by following the ridge to get either to Finive or to the Pic de Tanneverge, and so to descend to Emosson. The way to the Sageroux lies past the chalets of Boray and the Vogealle lake. From Boray to Vogealle a rough track climbs upward over a series of shelves and

Phot. Kern

SIXT, THE FER-À-CHEVAL AND THE SEVEN CASCADES

ledges between huge fragments of rock ; one of these, of colossal dimensions, is called the Pierre du Dard. This track skirts the steep flank of the Avaudruz, meandering over precipitous slopes.

The 'Pas de Boray,' an almost precipitous passage 500 yards long, is traversed on the way. This is a somewhat difficult piece of work owing to the narrowness of the path, which is barely half-a-yard wide.

In this neighbourhood, the sight of the desolate walls of the Fond-de-la-Combe suggests the thought of Jacques Balmat, who disappeared near here while looking for the gold which he thought lay hidden in the mountains. It was a mysterious end for the conqueror of Mont Blanc.

Here, at last, we reach the lake, with its pastures, its mountain hut and, a little further on, the pass, from which can be seen the picturesque Val d'Illiez. Mont Ruan, the Tour Saillère, the Dents du Midi, are near at hand, continuing and terminating above the Rhone the line of snow that runs from Mont Buet. We remark on our left the Dents Blanches de Champéry (8,955 ft.), and the Signal de Bostan. The barren and desolate mountain chain, with its masses of débris, its couloirs, its stony gullies, and its crumbling rocks, sinks towards the Pointe de Fornet, alongside of which runs the road to the Col de Coux.

Arrived at this point, we can make the descent to Samoëns by the Col de la Golèse, or perhaps by Fréterolle, follow the course of the Dranse de Savoie, revisit the lake of Montriond, and the ruins of the abbey of St. Jean d'Aulph, and thus reach the shores of Lake Geneva, where we shall start afresh on expeditions to the mountains in that lovely neighbourhood.

Phot. Kern

MEILLERIE : THE LAKE SIDE

CHAPTER XI

—

THE MOUNTAINS OF LAKE GENEVA

A FAMOUS writer, Michelet, loved to admire the beauty of these mountains from the Swiss shore of the lake. " At any hour of the afternoon," he said, " the prospect is one of an incomparable, and, at first sight, dazzling, splendour. But it is a soothing splendour, nevertheless. The two shores have contrived to blend all their brilliance and variety into a perfect harmony ; and the mountains of Savoy themselves, descending to the burnished mirror of the lake, are accomplices of the smiling slopes and valleys of the Pays de Vaud." But before exploring it in detail, we should indeed be ill-advised to forego the pleasure of seeing this neighbourhood as a whole, in a due perspective. And for that purpose, I can think of nothing that will suit us better than a trip in one of the comfortable steamers that ply from Geneva

Phot. Boissonnas

EVIAN

and travel the whole length of the lake. Time and again I have taken this delightful trip, and always with ever-fresh enjoyment. I find an endless variety in this landscape of wheeling mountains, moving with you as you sail, and continually discovering new aspects of their beauty against the background of the azure sky. The whole world is cast loose from its moorings as soon as the steamer leaves the quay. The Môle and the Salève climb upward behind the Voirons, the latter stretch out their long arm above the plain. Mont Blanc at length comes out of his hiding-place, and after Nyon, new shapes of other mountains start up above Thonon and Evian. The cool air, the blue water lapping the steamer's painted hull, the strains of the band—if there is one on board—and the nodding mountain-tops, all mix and mingle in this pleasant day-dream. Several of these peaks are already known to us. But we have still to make the acquaintance of the Dents d'Oche, the

Phot. Boissonnas

AT ST. GINGOLPH

heights of Mémise, the Grammont, not to mention the Rochers de Meillerie, beloved by Jean Jacques Rousseau.

The scene from the steamer's deck has been fittingly described in the words of Alexandre Dumas : " Blue waters and dark mountains, piled one above the other, like steps mounting towards heaven ; and behind them all the vision of the snowy brow of Mont Blanc." For my part, I shall see, till memory fails, the play of light and shade on the mountain-wall that lines the horizon on the Savoy shore. In cloud and mist, or clear-cut in the stainless air, I have seen the rocky ridge in every mood and in every sort of weather. I have seen it on stormy evenings, in a mood of sullenness, violet-complexioned and well-nigh black, against a sulphurous sky ; or again, at sunset, glowing in the fiery hues of tragedy. The celestial artist takes his brush, and dreamland is cradled on the waves, unfolding its enchanted peaks and promontories for our delectation.

But it is time to disembark at Evian, the little old town that has become a favourite summer resort. From here we shall make our way up the grassy slope which is all that remains of a lateral moraine of a Rhône glacier of by-gone days.

There is a first-rate road to the very foot of the Dent d'Oche, a road practicable for motor-cars, climbing, not too steeply, to the pretty village of St. Paul, from which a view of surpassing beauty may be had of the Lake. The village church looks out from among the thick foliage of bright green oaks, and there is a little peel-tower of mean and forlorn appearance. Here, we may imagine some d'Artagnan of other days, half gentleman, half peasant, had his lair. He was, we may be sure, a man of many shifts and wiles, a great stickler for the point of honour, and a ready fellow with his rapier: and here he lived till one fine day he rode away from his village home to the conquest of kingdoms.

This neighbourhood of the Dent d'Oche is a varied countryside of lofty walls of rock, forest and wide-spreading pasture, and including, besides, several lovely Alpine lakes, the drinking-places of the cattle. And with the flocks come the shepherds, going to and fro upon the mountains all the days of their lives, and moving from valley to upland pasture, according to the season of the year. The life is the same for all, a life of simplicity and privation, a laborious, and sometimes a hard and dreary one. The animals on the pasture lands are in the shepherd's especial care. It is his part to keep watch over them in fair weather or foul, to see that they do not stray, and to bring them to the chalet

when they are ready for market. The *fruitier*, for his part, looks after the dairy, and his assistants clean out the huge cattle-sheds, mow the grass, and fetch wood from the forest.

So, on these Alpine meadows, the tinkle of the cow-bell makes cheerful music. From the Cornettes de Bise, which are reached from the Valais by way of Vouvry, Miex, Tanney or Palaqueux, and from France by the pastures of Bise, there is a splendid view, no other summit being near enough to interrupt it. It is a dry and barren mountain, but has its varied aspects. A very steep path descends to the Haut de Tanney, whence the valley of Novel may be regained via the Lac de Lovenez.

The name of Novel has a tragic significance since the recent fire which completely destroyed this pretty village. It has, indeed, been partially restored, and climbing parties from the Vaudois still make it the goal of their favourite expedition : for the sufficient reason that from Lausanne, Montreux, or Vevey, there is only the lake to be crossed in order to reach it.

From St. Gingolph (a Franco-Swiss village divided by the Morge) there is a favourite climb to Novel, where lilies-of-the-valley may be gathered in spring, and cyclamens in August. The valley is bounded by the wooded slopes of the Blanchard, the Pic de Borée, the Château d'Oche, and the Dent du Velan ; while the outline of the Jumelles can be seen above the church steeple, and the declivities of the Grammont run down to the banks of the torrent. Novel is a centre and a goal ; for on all the mountains of the neighbourhood the traveller will find pathways winding uphill and down and all making for this village.

On the shores of the lake, the orchards are brimming over with blossom ; and the climb from Tour Ronde, under the great chestnut trees, reveals a countryside painted in colours so gay as to seem artificial. The stony pathway ascends to the wide plateau of Thollon, a smiling expanse of green sward sprinkled with red-roofed houses. While it is possible to reach Bernex by way of the neighbouring Col de Creuzat, another way, leading round the base of some lofty cliffs, is also open to us, by which we can reach, after much toil, the cleft between Mémise and Mont César ; whence the mountain can be traversed in the Borée-Novel direction. Opposite us, the northern wall of the imposing Dent d'Oche, still coated at this season of the year with a glaze of frost, makes a handsomely decorative appearance on its snowy pedestal, in which the little fir-trees are stuck like needles in a white pin-cushion.

Exquisite is the only word for this walk to Mémise. Spring has come in the valley below. The trees have put forth their first new leaves. The blue of the lake shines through the tender green, and the meadows are filled with flowers ; while, higher up, above Thollon, snow is visible in great patches, and evidently grows deeper. On the pasture there are gaps in the white mantle, and the withered grass is starred with crocuses, gentians, anemones. On the bare top of the mountain stands a wooden cross . . . We make the descent through forests in which the snow lies thick. A fine old fox; in search of his supper, passes us at a short distance and gazes with a sneer at the intruders who are struggling forward thigh-deep in the snow.

We can now either reach the lake between Meillerie and St. Gingolph by taking the ravine of the Locon on our way, or descend on Novel by making a circuit of the Blanchard.

There is a pathway leading up the coomb from this valley to the Dent du Velan and the lovely lake of Lovenez, with its romantic *alpage* and chalets. This is a favourite locality of mine ; and I like to watch the stragglers who come down the mountain-side laden with rhododendrons and pause here for a moment's rest before continuing their descent towards the plain.

Those lofty cliffs which cast their double shadows over Novel are the Twins—Les Jumelles. The Grande Jumelle is an easy climb by way of its long spine ; the Petite provides a short, but smart, piece of rock-climbing. With the help of a double rope, it is possible to make a descent which will land the climber in the narrow pass between the two peaks ; whence, by turning the flank of the mountain and following such tracks as he can pick up, he will attain the Grande Jumelle, at a point near the summit. In this region, overlooking Novel, there are two very difficult passages commonly known—and with good cause—as the 'Tombeaux des Allemands.' These are two separate couloirs, the 'Tombeau du Pissot' and the 'Tombeau de Lovenez.' They owe their sinister names to the numerous accidents of which they have been the scene, and it is only right that tourists should be warned against the very real dangers to be encountered in them. " To attempt without a rope the descent of either of these couloirs, and particularly of the 'Tombeau du Pissot'" says M. A. Martin, of the Jaman section of the Swiss Alpine Club, " is, in every case, to risk a probably fatal fall."

These couloirs both end in the Morge torrent. The Pissot, while easy at the start, has a slope which gradually grows narrower

and more rapid, till it reaches a waterfall, when it becomes an extremely steep ridge of smooth turf, ending in a wall of rock, which can be descended by means of two iron pegs (one of which has a ring), round which a double rope is passed.

As for the 'Tombeau de Lovenez,' it is situated under the little col overlooking the lake of the same name. A wide couloir descends directly into the valley of Novel, but is, unfortunately, interrupted by a cliff which cannot be seen from above ; so that, on several recent occasions, mountaineers, taking the continuity of the slope for granted, have glissaded down it in winter, with fatal results.

Between these two couloirs, and linking them to each other, a ledge, the 'Vire des Tombeaux,' runs along the mountain side ; but it is not used, unless by chamois, and perhaps by hunters.

It has been asserted that these two passages are more difficult and dangerous than any to be met with in the whole region of the Vaudois Alps ; in addition to which they must be pronounced deficient in respect of that entirely healthy excitement which a really fine scramble provides. But, on the other hand, we have the comfort of knowing that these are the only ugly corners on the Grammont, that glorious Olympian peak which towers above the lake opposite Vevey and Montreux. Power and nobility are proclaimed in the rhythmical lines running down from its summit, on either side, obliterating almost every excrescence of rock or sign of couloir. From that summit every spring, an avalanche, become a classic in the neighbourhood, descends by a path of its own making, a ravine hollowed out of the side of the mountain, and sometimes reaches the lake itself, obstructing the road with huge masses of piled-up snow. From Le Bouveret a little by-path leads to the pasturage of Charlavornaire—a spot noted for its lilies-of-the-valley—passes through a deep depression, and finally reaches the Lac de Tanney. There is another track through the hamlet of Les Evouettes, and the mountain may also be approached by the highway running from the plain of the Rhône through Vouvry and Miex.

It is an easy matter to reach the shores of Tanney, with its greenish-blue depths concealed in a circle of fir-trees. This idyllic spot is fragrant, for me, of very ancient memories. I can still see the chalet at the other end of the lake where Médico, the herdsman, used to give concerts on his mouth-organ in the evenings. We would light bonfires and enjoy the spectacle of the

Phot. Thomas

THE DENT D'OCHE (7,300 FT.)

Phot. E. Gos

Les Jumelles

long tongues of flame leaping up into the darkness. Or sometimes we would climb the Grammont, whose slopes are very gentle on this side, and form, in fact, merely an extended pasturage all the way to the summit. At the foot we would stop to gather blue thistles and then, laden with flowers—your tourist never seems to have the sense to wait till he is on his way down, before making up his nosegay—we would take the path which goes round the lake and climbs gradually towards the forest. Here the sunshine plays hide-and-seek among the tree-trunks, glinting on the fragments of rock, the stony slides, the little oases of ferns and moss. Then little by little the trees thin out, the forest is left behind, and an open pasture succeeds, across which the path goes zigzagging towards the chalets which can be seen from Les Jumelles. The passage of cattle in the same direction has worn a number of parallel furrows in the sward of the pasturage. The stemless gentian, nevertheless, is in a happy mood here, witness the dense blue patches everywhere and the tubular corollas bowing to the sun. Anemones, and late crocuses by the patches of snow, make a brave display on the meadow. Higher up, the rhododendron bushes are already in flower, with

Phot. Kern

Novel

Phot. E. Gos

The Rochers de Mémise (5,520 ft.)

swelling buds of a dusky red sprouting on every branch amid the gleaming green of their young leaves. On the open slope the cattle browse at ease, cows of all colours, brown, white, black, or spotted, with their heifers sunning themselves near by. Every step sets their heavy bells ringing ; a right cheerful chime it is to hear, now deep, now muffled, and presently fading away on the mountain-side, to be lost in space.

The Grammont is well-named Gras-Mont, if this—perhaps fanciful—etymology be admitted ; for it grows an abundant crop of grass, which the cattle enjoy and thrive on. Instead of making directly for the top, we shall be better repaid by a climb along the ridge overhanging the cliffs and *déva-loirs* which plunge down to the lake shore. Here, while the snow lies on the summit, it is easy to imagine

Phot. Kern

The Col Trei Pertuis and the Chalets d'Oche

Phot. Boissonnas

YVOIRE : THE CASTLE-KEEP

oneself upon a peak of formidable height ; for the frozen slope on the side next St. Gingolph and Le Bouveret shows signs, in places, of taking itself for a very serious piece of climbing. Nevertheless, of all the mountains in this district, the Grammont is my favourite, so splendid is the view from the summit. Beneath lies Lake Geneva, whose waters reach the very foot of the mountain ; and our eyes search the Vaudois shore opposite, straining to pick out its towns and villages, climbing far-off peaks, and covering vast distances in a second of time. Presently a little cloudlet will float into the sky. The infinite blue grows pale, and the lake becomes the home of shadows, emerald, violet and grey. . . . .

Phot. Boissonnas

ON THE SHORES OF LAKE GENEVA

Phot. Boissonnas

THE SALÈVE (4,528 FT.)

CHAPTER XII

—

ANNECY AND THE ROUTE DES ALPES

WHO has not heard of the Route des Alpes, the superb highway, growing more famous every day, which binds Chamonix to the shores of the Mediterranean by a chain whose links are the most picturesque localities in France? This magnificent road skirts those very mountains with which we are concerned, and the great motor-cars, starting from Annecy, make the tour of the lake (with its splendid views of the Dent de Lanfon and the Tournette) run through Faverges and Ugines, ascend the gorge of the Arly, traverse Flumet under the Rochers de l'Etale, and so arrive at Mégève, whence they reach Chamonix.

We have already had a glimpse, from the Grand Bornand and the Pointe Percée, of a vast extent of country. This region, to which belong St. Jean-de-Sixt, Thônes, and Manigod, is bounded by the short chain of the Rochers de Lachat and the much longer one of the Aravis, which runs onwards to Mont Charvin, by the Rochers de l'Etale.

Phot. Kern

ANNECY : THE QUAYS

Phot. Granier

THE DENTS DE LANFON (5,949 FT.)

Phot. Granier

IN THE MASSIF OF THE TOURNETTE

Phot. Boissonnas

THE GORGE OF THE FIER

Phot. Marijon

THÔNES

THE PONT DE LA CAILLE

From the Bombardelle chalets under the Grande Forclaz a good road climbs to La Clusaz, an extremely pretty village and fine holiday centre, giving access to the Tête Pelouse, the Rochers de la Balmaz (8,700 ft.) and the Porte des Aravis (7,650 ft.): bare and barren summits, very similar in their utter nakedness. But look southwards from Thônes: the eye is at once attracted by a solitary peak, the Tournette (7,733 ft.) This isolated mountain is the meeting-place of many roads and its summit consists of an enormous block, called the Fauteuil ("Armchair"), which can be easily climbed, thanks to the iron ladders fixed upon the rock. A splendid and unique view may be had from here of the transparent blue sheet of the Lac d'Annecy, while a little farther to the north, the Roche Murraz (5,859 ft.), the Pointe de Lanfon (5,521 ft.), and the Dent du Cruet (6,013 ft.) attract attention. The Tête de Parmelan (6,019 ft.), closes, on this side, the rocky ridge girdling the lake. This country-side is especially charming in autumn, when the trees are russet-clad and the smooth turf of the slopes is turning to a golden hue. Nature arrays herself as if for an Alpine festival. Jollity breathes in the air, gaiety radiates from this riot of colours. The tourist catches the infection. He feels happy, he knows not why; and sees for the first time, in a kind of luminous dream, the legendary lake, the lake made famous by the praises of so many thousands of travellers.

Here, again, the country can be best viewed from a steamer, and Chavoires is the first port of call. (Numerous walks: the meadows of Talabar with a fine view of Annecy and the lake, the 'Vallon de Jean-Jacques,' the Col du Pré Vernet,the northern summit of Mont Veyrier, and Mont Baron.)

After a few minutes' steaming, we reach Veyrier. This village enjoys plenty of sunshine and is dominated by an elegant church in the modern Gothic style. Then come the château of Fésigny, and the grottoes supposed to have been inhabited by the Gallo-Romans. This is the starting-place for the ascent of Mont Baron, from which Mont Blanc can be descried. Further on, Menthon-St.-Bernard comes in sight, and as one's steamer leaves the quay a fine view can be had, about the middle of the lake, of meadows framed in splendid walnut-trees in the foreground on the eastern side, with a cliff plunging into the waves, while, higher up, the houses of the village of Menthon are scattered round the base of a swelling mound, clad in hoary woods. The feudal manor of the Menthon family is proudly

perched between the formidable Dents de Lanfon and the rounded hip of Mont Veyrier.

It was at the castle of Menthon that St. Bernard, the founder of the Hospices on the Great and Little St. Bernard, was born in the Xth century. On the left bank lies St. Jorioz, in a fertile plain. In the neighbourhood of this village, which lies at the foot of the Semnoz, are many beautiful excursions, affording fine views of the lake and the Tournette. The crossing from St. Jorioz or from Menthon to Talloires is the most striking part of the zigzagging journey round the lake.

The district of Lovagny, with its celebrated gorges of the Fier, and its mediæval castle of Montrottier, has attractions for the tourist widely differing from the sunlit splendours of the shores of the Lake of Annecy. " These gorges surpass in picturesqueness and in striking grandeur many of the most famous gorges in the world ; and those of Lovagny must be classed among the greatest curiosities of the Alps. A suitable introduction to them is furnished by the Pont des Liasses, under which the hidden current of the Fier flows through fantastic and monstrous cavities in the rock. At the entrance to the gorge, a stream formed of the melted ice of dissolved glaciers has scooped out, with the aid of a few pebbles, a kind of giant's beef-tub, similar to the one at Lucerne, but it can only be seen at low-water. At the outlet of the gorge, there is a striking view of the "Sea of Rocks," a labyrinth through which the Fier has worn a difficult passage. This maze becomes so narrow in the neighbourhood of a certain enormous mass of rock, known as the Pierre-des-Fées, that one might leap in one bound over all the united waters of the Fier and of the overflow of the Lake of Annecy."

Here, then, we are come to the old-time city, to the modest little town ; for Annecy is both, and lovely into the bargain : fair among the fairest. Every year sees her growing importance as the centre of all the life of Upper Savoy. Rest and refreshment, if they are to be found anywhere, we shall find here, under the venerable trees that line the banks of the lake.

Gazing at you, oh mountains, mirrored in the transparent blue waters, I think of the inexhaustible treasures of joy you have in store for those who will climb to find them. Once more my eyes travel from valley to glacier, from glacier to summit, and my heart repeats the words that stand as epigraph to this book :

" *Par l'amour de la montagne, élever les âmes,*
développer les énergies."

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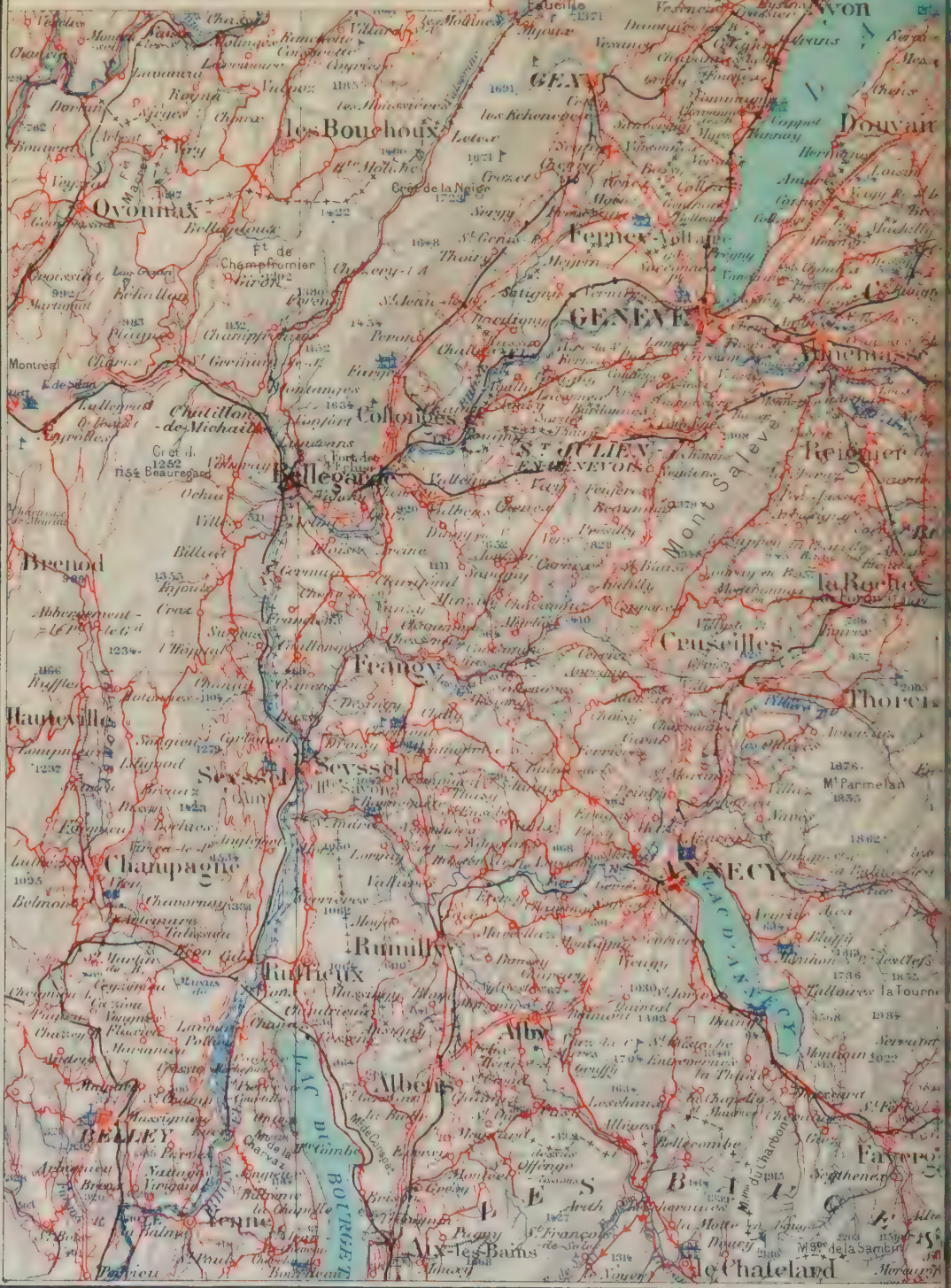

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